Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-FOUR • NUMBER FIVE • NOVEMBER 1987

AIDS: Are Heterosexuals at Risk?
Michael A. Fumento

The New York (Jewish) Intellectuals
Ruth R. Wisse

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Books in Review:

Owen Harries / Robert Alter / Arch Puddington / John J. DiIulio, Jr. / Terry Teachout / William McGurn

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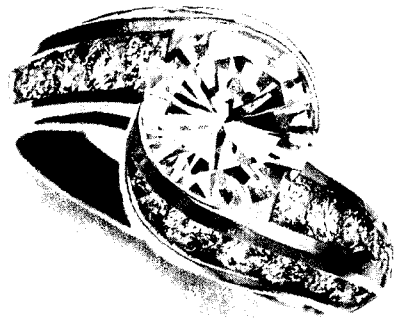

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Philosophy & Faith

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am very grateful to Hilton Kramer ["The Importance of Sidney Hook," August] for his vindication of my political thought and behavior during the last fifty years.

It is not therefore out of churlishness that I am moved to comment on some of his observations. From the perspective of the things that mean most to me I must confess that I am more concerned with his criticisms of my philosophy than I am by the animadversions on my anti-Communism by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., so obviously animated by his unreflective reversal of judgment about the Kremlin and its intentions and actions toward the democratic world. If only for the record, therefore, I must enter this demurral from some of Hilton Kramer's statements. Indeed, I am thankful that he has given me an opportunity to do so since the impression of so perceptive and intelligent a reader as Hilton Kramer cannot be lightly discounted.

Mr. Kramer refers to the philosophy of John Dewey, which was the starting point of my own philosophical development, as "spiritually arid." Unless he is using the term "spiritual," as he does the term "soul," in a literal sense (i.e., as something disembodied, rather than as an activity of the acculturated organism), I would suggest that his judgment would be modified by a rereading of Dewey's *Experience and Nature*, his *Ethics*, or his *Art as Experience*. But more pertinent to Mr. Kramer's criticism seems to be his unfamiliarity with the bulk of my own philosophical writings that bear in detail and at considerable length on the very questions he charges me with ignoring or dismissing as inconsequential as a result of Dewey's influence on me.

As a young man, Mr. Kramer correctly reports, I nourished the hope of writing a book on Dostoevsky because of the sweep, dramatic power, and significance of his ideas about man, his place in the cosmos, and the foundations of morality. After referring to the episode, Mr. Kramer writes:

> And then [Hook] adds surprisingly: "Despite my absorption with political and social affairs, I still believe that the questions of God, freedom, and immortality are the most important of all questions that human beings can face." From an avowed rationalist and atheist, this is an extraordinary admission, but we hear little more about it in the course of this long chronicle.

Mr. Kramer could have heard more about these questions and the religious and metaphysical issues they pose had he read my *The Quest for Being* and *Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life*, large sections of my *Education for Modern Man*, and scores of articles devoted to related themes. (Among my very first contributions to professional philosophical journals was an essay devoted to "The Ethics of Suicide," *International Journal of Ethics*, January 1927.) Perhaps I should have summarized their argument in my already overlong chronicle of my life.

That Mr. Kramer should regard it as an "extraordinary admission" for a rationalist and atheist to declare that questions of God's existence, the place of human freedom in a determined world, immortality or death are important testifies to the strength of a traditional common assumption that naturalism, the reasoned denial of all varieties of supernaturalist transcendence, is necessarily reductive. But important questions do not necessarily disappear from human concern because one offers negative answers to them, particularly for a fallibilist to whom there are no final, absolute solutions. And to the complex question of human freedom I do not offer a negative answer in all senses of the term.

The very fact that so many persons cannot live with their political disillusionment without yielding to the temptations of religious belief, no matter how refined, is usually evidence that they had not thought through the grounds of their initial faith or lack of it. This is the sad tale of many left bereft and chastened by their unhappy political pilgrimages. I admit that no unillusioned naturalism can match the consolatory cosmic optimism of religious world views that dismiss a naturalist outlook on the world as limited and arid. Limited it may be, but not unimaginative. It is limited by the

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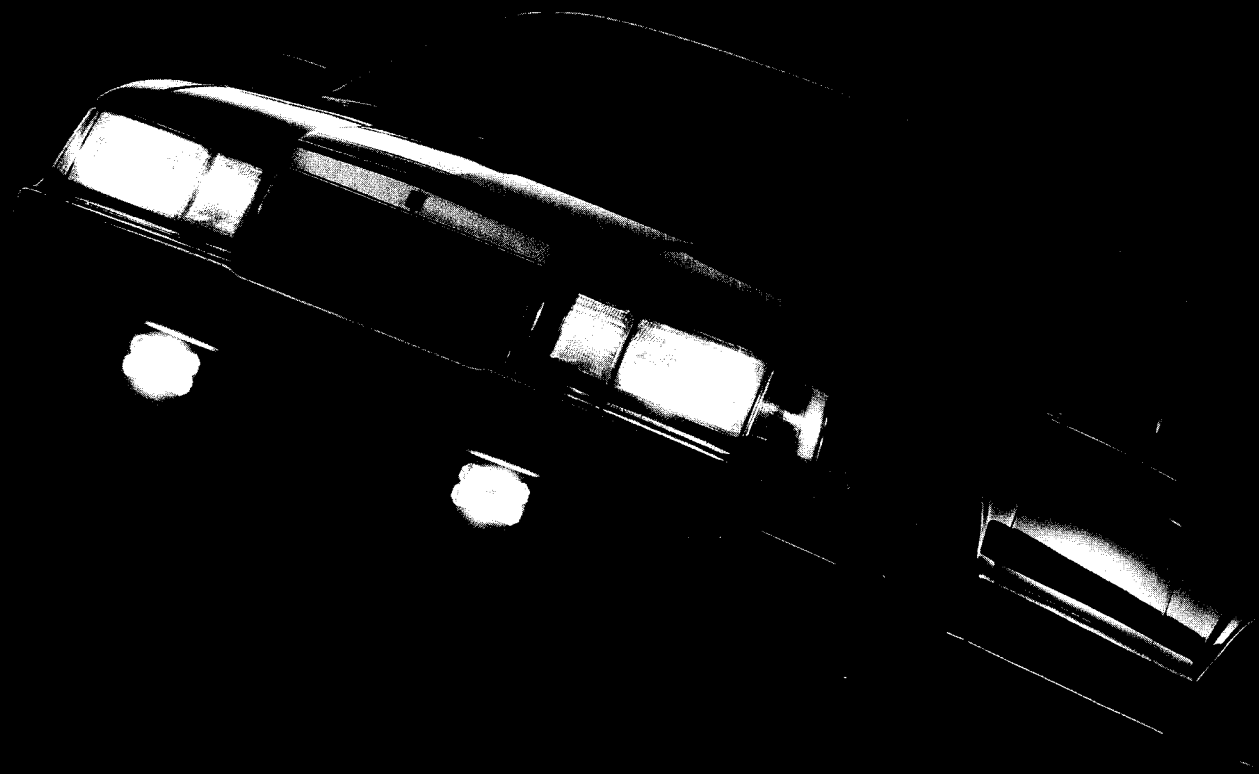

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available evidence, yet not closed to the multiple dimensions and glories of authentic human experience conditioned by the compulsions of natural existence. A life based on it usually requires more courage than one inspired by a will to believe or an irrational leap of faith. Properly interpreted, there is still a profound truth in Marx's observation that the critique of religion is the basis of all rational criticism.

Only unfamiliarity with many of my writings can account for Mr. Kramer's assertion that my mind "has long been closed to the whole religious dimension of human affairs." I have been well aware of the testimony of religious experience and the long history of religious institutions. But the experience itself, no matter how intense, is not compelling evidence of the objective existence of what has been testified to. Much of my life has been spent criticizing the mischievous influence of institutional religion on *public* human affairs and in pleading for freedom for religious belief and disbelief in all cultures as a *private* human affair (cf. my discussion with Jacques Maritain anent my criticism of T.S. Eliot in my *Philosophy and Public Policy*).

I am less concerned with the harsh criticisms by Mr. Kramer of my "cultural philistinism," since they are to some extent based on misunderstandings of my positions for which I am in part responsible. Here as elsewhere I unwisely yielded to pressure to cut an overlong manuscript. My primary objections to the Festival of Arts of the Congress for Cultural Freedom were to its expense. It would have been less costly had it been restricted mainly to works that had been tabooed in totalitarian cultures. There were other auspices under which the rest could have been shown. There were alternative cultural activities for our limited resources that were more in keeping with the announced goal of the Freedom Manifesto. In the sentence in which I referred to the existence of great works of art in authoritarian and undemocratic cultures, I had in mind the fact that not all freedoms are interrelated.

I have never denied the significance of *Partisan Review* as an organ for independent left-wing political and cultural thought. I contested, and still do, the widespread myth that it was the center of active political life at the time. I did not regard its editors, some of whom had been my students, as "ignorant dolts and untalented knaves," but found offensive their passing themselves off to themselves and others as serious political activists, basking in the cachet of revolutionary dedication. Only one of them, Dwight Macdonald, for a short time was really politically engaged. The rest were litterateurs of varied talent who led risk-free lives—which was virtue enough if it did not pretend to be something more.

I still call myself a socialist or social democrat for many reasons, but especially to make it clear that it is possible to oppose Communism from the standpoint of a democratic welfare state. By this time everyone is aware that for me the basic issue of our age is the conflict between a free society and totalitarianism. So long as we preserve the political processes of freely given consent, the questions of socialism or capitalism are of degree, of more or less. In an extended sense of the term, I have contended that socialism today can best be construed as democracy, as a way of life which is closer to Dewey's explicit views than Marx's. The few contexts in which I currently refer to myself as a socialist are not misleading. Indeed, it is much less misleading than those who today call themselves "Christian" although they believe either God is dead or are doubtful of His existence, and less misleading than many who proudly regard themselves as "liberals" although passionately defending, among other illiberal practices, reverse discrimination and various disguised forms of the quota system.

That despite all his disagreements and perceptions of the flaws in my book, which I suspect are more numerous than he has expressed, Hilton Kramer should be so generous in his overall judgment is very gratifying to me. Indeed, his words leave me with a feeling of regret that I have not enough years left to live up to them.

SIDNEY HOOK
Stanford, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hilton Kramer has written a most appreciative article on the contributions of Sidney Hook to the political and intellectual life of America, and has justly appraised Hook's autobiography *Out of Step* as an "indispensable text for our times." In these contributions Hook was much inspired and guided by the teachings of John Dewey, who early recognized in Hook, as a young student, the rare combination of logical acumen, social understanding, and extraordinary courage that have marked his whole life. On April 22, 1927, Dewey wrote to his old friend and colleague George Herbert Mead of this new young man: "We have a man who is finishing soon who promises to be a prize, Sidney Hook. He has a section in his dissertation on the metaphysics of the instrument which is a corker. I almost feel that I am ready to quit, as he has not only got the point but sees many implications which I hadn't seen. . . ." And how much Dewey's prophecy was fulfilled can be judged from a letter that the cautious philosopher-logician Clarence I. Lewis sent to Hook concerning his address to the American Philosophical Association in 1960 on the theme "Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life" [published in COMMENTARY, August 1960]: "I have an inclination —a compulsion even—to tell you that I think this presidential address the best delivered in any branch of the association in my lifetime. I could add my conviction that pragmatically your contribution is the most important of any in the present generation. . . ."

Mr. Kramer, however, thinks that Hook paid a high penalty for Dewey's influence, for "Dewey's is a spiritually arid philosophy," in Mr. Kramer's opinion: "It leaves the soul . . . defenseless and mute in the face of life." According to Mr. Kramer, Dewey has "no way of accounting" for the poetry of life, the tragedies of history, "not to mention the tragic dimension of human experience," in the face of which "its problem-solving mentality has proved to be a feeble instrument." . . .

Although Dewey in his long life went through successive stages of emphasis, he remains perhaps the only modern American philosopher who asserted having had a genuine mystical experience. He was never satisfied that he could interpret it adequately, but it explains in part the enthusiasm with which he wrote of Maurice Maeterlinck's mysticism, of Henri Bergson, and of Alfred North Whitehead's panpsychist cosmology. Evidently the

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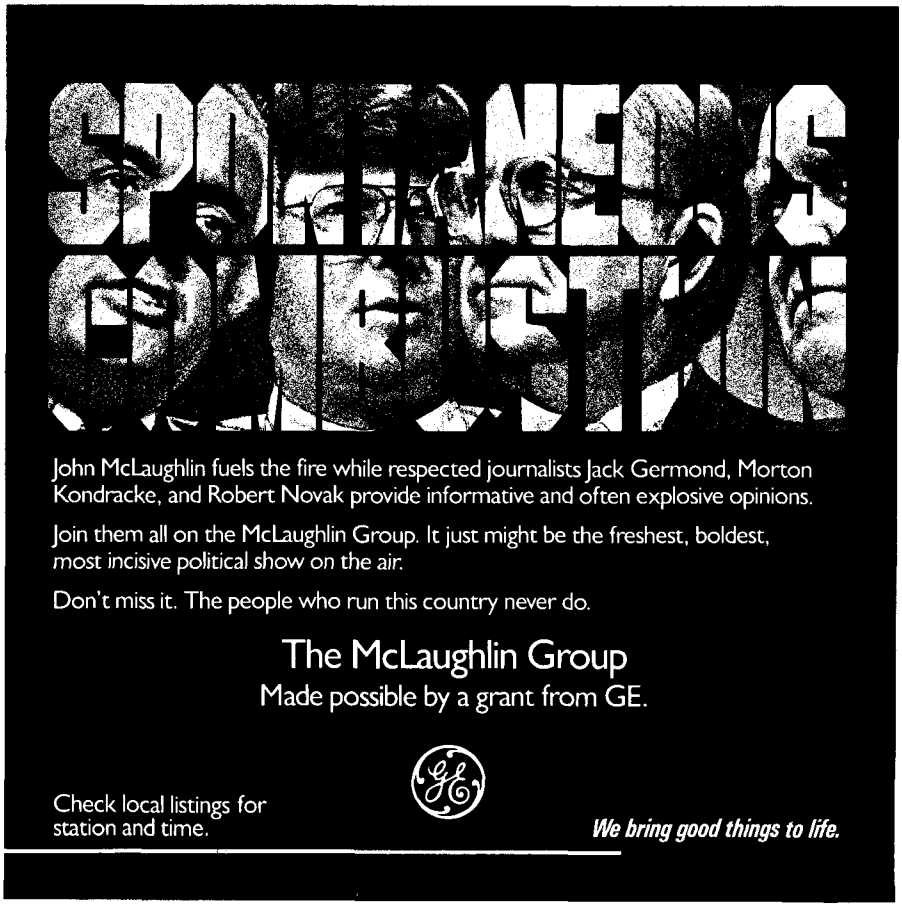
human experience in terms of which, according to Dewey, a philosophy should be tested was not to be restricted in some narrow, arbitrary way. . . . Of course, Dewey, always concerned with the betterment of human lives, refused to ignore practicable goals in favor of contemplating compulsively the insoluble questions. It is true that Dewey would have preferred, for instance, a pragmatic approach to the Holocaust, that is, to inquire how we could prevent a next Holocaust rather than to speculate, perhaps fruitlessly, as to the attributes of a God Who so fashioned the laws of nature as to allow for limitless depravities in human nature, a God incapable or undesirous of intervening pragmatically into human history, as, according to tradition, He had done on previous occasions. I do not know whether or not Mr. Kramer seeks a form of theistic philosophy. But a theism which eventuated in a maleficent God, as in Thomas Hardy's view of an unconscious, evolving Will, or a President of the Immortals, sporting or experimenting with human beings, still leaves us virtually ineffective in the face of macro-misery.

Doesn't Mr. Kramer himself, however, finally have recourse to a form of pragmatic test? For he proposes to test a philosophy by its success in defending the soul and making it articulate in the face of "extreme experience." Perhaps Mr. Kramer's is a pragmatism more akin to William James's than to Dewey's, though Dewey in *Philosophy and Civilization* pleaded for a philosophy that would liberate the imagination and help envisage new conceptions of the universe. It was for a relatively brief period during and after World War I that he felt the basic test of philosophies to lie in political action, even as a generation earlier he had believed that a philosophy was most adequately tested in educational methods, a view he later modified considerably. And always, whether in writing of Matthew Arnold, Robert Browning, or Tolstoy, or in choosing Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as the novel which (apart from *Looking Backward*) had most affected his era, Dewey believed that the poet and the novelist led mankind in those intuitions that would advance its existence, and that philosophers followed in their footsteps. When he went to the Armory Show in 1913, his delight, as one of his companions at the time told me, was boundless as he saw a freer, more freshly perceptive and expressive art in formation.

Mr. Kramer is surprised that Sidney Hook, an avowed rationalist and atheist, has had an abiding interest in the classical questions of "God, freedom, and immortality." Sidney Hook is a rationalist in the usual sense of wishing to think as profoundly and dispassionately as he can. The classical rationalists, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, believed in addition that all metaphysical truths, including the existence of God, could be derived logically from self-evident axioms; none of them was an atheist. Hook parts company with them on this point, and in this sense he is equally an empiricist. He has, however, never accepted the view of the "logical empiricists" that the ultimate metaphysical questions are meaningless. And as a rational philosopher, experiencing all the concerns and perplexities of human beings, he returns to consider the recurrent, perhaps insoluble, questions of philosophy.

Regrettably, Mr. Kramer accuses Sidney Hook of a certain "cultural philistinism" toward American critics and novelists. Has the body of evidence that Hook could adduce for his opinion been sufficiently weighed? European novelists wrote great political novels during the period of Hook's most intense activity and thought—Arthur Koestler with *Darkness at Noon*, Ignazio Silone with *Bread and Wine* and *The Seed Beneath the Snow*, and George Orwell with *1984*. Did any American write a novel of comparable enduring significance? And in explaining the lesser American achievement, Hook is probably right in finding there was a dilettantish, thin, secondhand character to the political experience of American literary intellectuals. Did the later zeal of various American women writers of fiction for their North Vietnamese Communist hosts accrue from their many years of political dabbling?

Let us be thankful that when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he battled the left-wing Philistines, there was a touch in Sidney Hook of the cultural Samson; he is, however, the only American thinker that Philistines of sundry varieties have really feared, and on occasions that I have seen, they would have chained him, if they could.

Such thinkers as Dewey and Hook represent a return to the tradition of wisdom, that of the Seven Wise Men of Hellas, the sages of ancient Greece. They were mainly lawgivers, men of affairs, and even included such a scientist and marketing expert as Thales, a kind of Hellenic Benjamin Franklin, who, like Franklin, had no interest in metaphysical verbalizing. Their wisdom was an application of intelligent judgment to human problems, and though they accepted the gods, they had little to say about them. Plato, in his counterrevolution against wisdom, defined philosophy instead as the study of death, and wanted to make professional philosophers the ruling elite; he himself failed pathetically in Syracuse, and showed all the perverse angularity in practical judgment that his disciple Bertrand Russell did in later years.

Meanwhile, in the world today, the word "pragmatic" has become the symbol in every country for a rational approach to political and social problems, free from ideological postulates or doctrinaire commitments. From America to the Western European nations, to the African and Latin American republics, to China and the Soviet Union, to call a statesman "pragmatic" is to indicate that he wishes to study the facts in every problem-situation, and is then also more likely to aim at the happiest solution available under the given conditions. "Existentialist" and indeed "Marxist" have receded in usage; "pragmatic" signifies the call to men from different backgrounds: let us reason together as men. . . .

For many years . . . nobody has been more influential than Sidney Hook in maintaining the standpoint of wisdom. His unswerving resolve to take all the relevant considerations into account in addressing problems, to maintain open-mindedness, and to analyze fully and courageously, while unfailingly preserving his good humor, merits the gratitude of people everywhere.

LEWIS S. FEUER
Charlottesville, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations on the publication of Hilton Kramer's brilliant, well-rounded essay on Sidney Hook. A real scoop. We are all in your debt.

ELLA WOLFE
Palo Alto, California

HILTON KRAMER writes:

It was not to be expected that Sidney Hook would agree with my assessment of John Dewey and his intellectual influence. I must point out, however, that my criticism in this matter is not based on any "unfamiliarity" with Mr. Hook's philosophical writings. Reading Mr. Hook's letter—and Lewis S. Feuer's, too—I am reminded of an earlier effort I made to set the record straight about Sidney Hook's importance. That was my long review of his *Philosophy and Public Policy* in the New York *Times Book Review* for February 8, 1981. After that review was published, Sidney Hook and I met for the first time. Over a very agreeable lunch, he expressed his amazement again and again that I should have displayed so comprehensive a knowledge of his writings. It was not, perhaps, the kind of knowledge he expected from anyone seriously interested in art. Understandably, he seems now to have forgotten his remarks on that occasion, for John Dewey and his influence were not then the issues under discussion.

I am grateful to Ella Wolfe for her very kind words.

Judicial Review

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Walter Berns makes such a broad-based attack on the constitutional law of the last forty years that one wonders, notwithstanding his disclaimer, whether he accepts the legitimacy of judicial review at all ["Government by Lawyers & Judges," June]. Given his skepticism about the function of the federal judiciary in protecting individual rights against substantive abridgment by state legislatures, it is highly ironic that he suggests the privileges-or-immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment as the proper grounding for protection against state legislation. If the view of the dissenters had prevailed in the *Slaughter-House Cases* (the 1873 case that Mr. Berns derides as "ridiculous"), that the privileges-or-immunities clause protects those rights "which of right belong to the citizens of all free governments," the federal judiciary would be even less moored in the text of the Constitution than it is today when it discerns the nature and scope of individual liberties.

Moreover, if the privileges-or-immunities clause were the proper grounding for the elaboration of individual rights under the Constitution, there could be no objection that the guarantees run only against the judicial and executive branches of state governments (as Mr. Berns interprets the other clauses of section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment, even though the amendment refers to "any State" and not "any State court or sheriff"), for the privileges-or-immunities clause requires that no state shall make or enforce any *law* that impairs those rights.

There is no real support in the text of the Fourteenth Amendment for what appears to be one of Mr. Berns's main points: that the amendment intended only Congress and not the courts to define the individual rights protected against state abridgment. Mr. Berns argues that, just as New York may articulate the components of citizenship of New York, so may Congress articulate the privileges and immunities of American citizenship. Of course Congress *may* do so, but section 5 of the amendment, which gives Congress this power, does not necessarily lodge it there exclusively. By giving Congress the power to enforce the protections of the amendment, section 5 does not render those protections void unless Congress intervenes. Rather, it adds to the powers of Congress enumerated in Article I. As a result, Congress *may* take affirmative steps to prevent or punish deprivations of fundamental rights by the states, by, for example, enacting a criminal statute prohibiting interference with interstate travel. The rights of the Fourteenth Amendment are nonetheless self-executing against the states, as are the rights of the first eight amendments that operate against Congress and the rights of Article I, section 10, that limit the power of the states by prohibiting them from passing ex-post-facto laws, bills of attainder, and import taxes.

Indeed, why should the power to define the privileges and immunities of American citizenship rest solely with Congress? If we were dependent on Congress for an

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enumeration of the fundamentals of American citizenship, we would be in a perilous state indeed; what Congress may grant it may take away. In this regard it is wise to remember that the Framers assumed that fundamental rights existed against the national government, and that the Federalists did not consider a list of such rights necessary, so certain were they of their existence. Indeed, the Federalists were concerned, and in this they were correct, that such a list would encourage people to believe that no other fundamental rights existed. Thus the Ninth Amendment assures us that this is not the case, and that there may well be other rights enjoyed by the people.

It is highly unlikely that the Framers believed that the unenumerated rights retained by the people were to be "filled in" only by Congress as time went on, especially when one notes that, as lawyers and participants in the state and national politics of their day, many of the Framers must have known that most law was "made" by common-law courts in the 18th century, and that legislatures met only for short periods during the year. The role of the courts in making the common law continues to be important in the states—and, interestingly, although Mr. Berns notes that "New York" may define the attributes of New York citizenship, he advances no reason to convince us that the New York Court of Appeals, as well as the New York Assembly, could not inform the notion of New York citizenship. If the New York courts define New York citizenship, do they not legitimately make law—guided, to be sure, by considerations of policy, just as they are when they define the scope of tort liability? Why would, or do, the federal courts act with less legitimacy when they decide what attributes "belong of right to the citizens of all free governments"?

This is not to deny that the process of defining individual rights is a perilous one, especially when the federal courts venture beyond those rights specifically mentioned in the first eight amendments. When the Supreme Court goes far ahead of public opinion in its idea of what the basic rights of Americans are, constitutional discord is certain to result. But this process of constitutional adjudication is not the naked usurpation described by Walter Berns.

PAUL WOLFSON
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Walter Berns provides irrefutable evidence . . . that judicial review has replaced legislation as the primary instrument of change in our body politic. It is alarming that, according to the evidence provided by Mr. Berns, a great many Supreme Court decisions have gone in one direction in order to negate state (and federal) legislative decisions in the opposite direction. When one adds, as Mr. Berns does, that the Justices are unelected, effectively unrecallable, and can remain on the bench as long as their whimsy dictates (or health permits), alarm turns to fright. . . .

My one quibble with Mr. Berns's analysis is this: he implies that the Court should not pursue an activist role, because if it does it is usurping the legislative function. But in order to invalidate prior injudicious Supreme Court decisions, doesn't the Court have to take an activist role? . . . While such an exercise might indeed be abused, a greater abuse would occur if previous unwise decisions were permitted to stand.

BRYAN TAPLITS
Cincinnati, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Walter Berns . . . should be thanked for showing how our constitutional guarantees of liberty and the protection of rights rest on the fundamental political and moral principle of self-government, . . . which means that laws are based on the consent of the governed. We consent to the laws that are promulgated because they are created by people who represent our interests. Our legislators, our elected officials, are supposed to reflect our collective interests.

Legislative politics, the politics of interests, require that coalitions be created around common interests. In this kind of politics, not all interests will be satisfied at all times. There are always winners and losers. Those who lose face the challenge of finding ways of becoming part of the next legislative majority. But people with one interest in common may not share other interests; in fact, they can differ widely on other issues. This forces people trying to promote an interest to be moderate in their demands, for if they are not, the coalitions they are trying to form will collapse and they will lose once again. The advantage of legislative politics is that all parties with interests are forced to tolerate differences.

But since legislatures make laws by majority votes, there is always a danger that minorities will need protection against those majorities that want to tyrannize them. To prevent majority tyranny, the Constitution provides a separation of powers. Among other things, it provides the people with certain rights that cannot be denied in the name of any collective interest. One of the roles of the courts is to protect the rights of minorities.

The politics of rights, however, creates disunity rather than unity. Experience with the debates over rights shows that issues can easily be framed in the most extreme terms. Often groups demanding that their rights be protected tend to be unwilling to share those rights with others. Thus, differences of opinion tend to be interpreted as signs of evil intention. . . . Losers begin to believe that what may have originally been their interests are now their rights, and that, in losing, their rights have been violated. Once people interpret every loss as a threat to their rights, they begin to lose their sense of "belonging" to the government to which they have historically consented. Such people are more likely to consider lawless responses because they believe they have no recourse to the legislatures to protect them.

This applies to everyone. When a "minority" perpetually fears majorities and constantly complains that its rights are being violated, it isolates itself even further from the majority. Sooner or later it begins to hate majorities. . . . Similarly, the majority begins to despise those whose rights are protected by the Courts . . . .

These circumstances create an unhealthy polarity, . . . as has been shown in the conflicts created over such issues as abortion and affirmative action.

They also confirm the premise that no matter what the Court does, ultimately a successful political effort on behalf of rights requires the consent of the losers. No matter what people claim "ought" to happen, the fact is that the key to democracy is self-gov-

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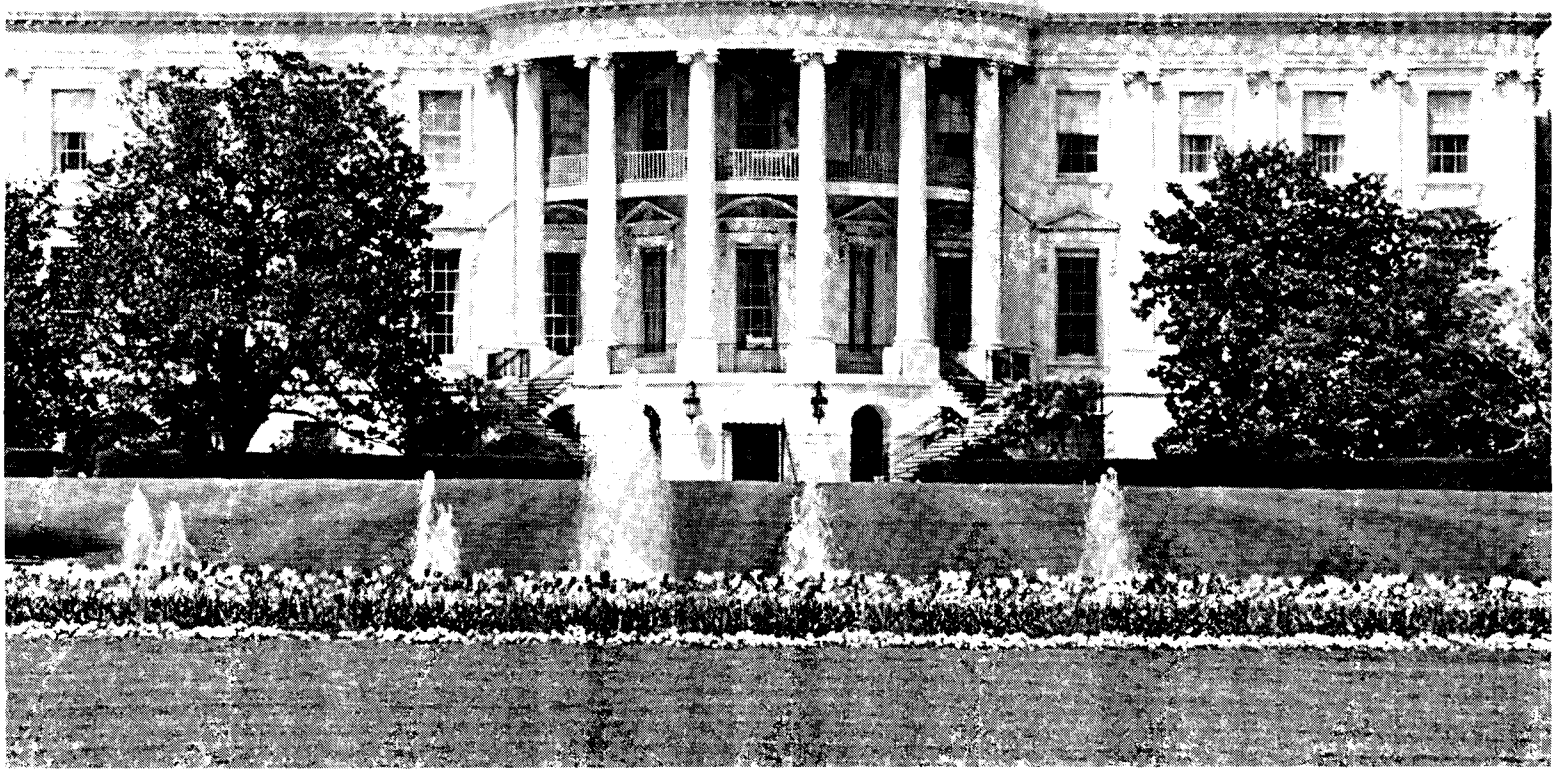

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ernment and the key to this is the consent of the governed. . . . When issues produce intense conflicts, the process of developing consent rests on forcing competing parties with competing interests to turn to legislative politics. . . . This is the only true method of producing toleration. . . .

MARTIN J. PLAX
Shaker Heights, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am in full agreement with Walter Berns on the evils of "Government by Lawyers & Judges." In the course of his article, however, he makes some strange statements about the thought of the Founding Fathers, and of the Framers of the Constitution. He writes:

> In theory, the country was indeed founded by self-interested men who acted in order to secure their private rights; in practice, however, these same men pledged "to each other [their] Lives, [their] Fortunes and [their] sacred Honor."

The men who signed the Declaration of Independence would be amazed to learn that, in making their honorable pledges to each other, to secure the rights with which they had been "endowed by their Creator," their practice was somehow at odds with their theory.

Mr. Berns also writes that

> In theory, the country was founded by men claiming rights against one another; in fact, they were men closely associated in families, churches, and a host of private institutions.

The country was certainly founded by men who claimed rights. Americans declared "taxation without representation is tyranny." They were "against" the British for attempting to violate their rights. The rights they claimed were the rights of each, which all were pledged to support and defend. Among the individual rights they claimed were, of course, the rights to be associated in families, churches, etc. Where is the opposition between "theory" and "fact"?

Again, Mr. Berns writes:

> According to their books, government is created by men who had been living in a state of nature and are seeking to escape its miseries; in fact, the American government was created by men whose characters had been formed under the laws of an older and civilized politics.

The Declaration of Independence says that

> whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends [viz., "to secure these rights"] it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government . . .

When the American people "dissolved the political bands" by which they had been "connected" to Great Britain, they were not, by the theory of their books, in a state of nature. If they had been, they could not have acted as "one people" or as "the good people of these colonies." Mr. Berns refers to them as having characters formed by "an older and civilized politics." But George Washington in 1783 put it better, when he said that the foundation of American government

> was not laid in the gloomy ages of ignorance and superstition, but at an epoch when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined than at any other period.

Further, Mr. Berns writes that

> . . . the Framers . . . knew that their principles forbade the use of the laws directly to generate virtuous habits [but] they did not regard it as improper for the laws . . . to support the private institutions in which those habits had been generated and were to be generated.

I do not know what Mr. Berns means by "directly to generate." But the Northwest Ordinance, which laid down the fundamental pattern for forming the governments of the new states to be added to the union, declares that

> Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.

Our Founding Fathers made an assumption that I fear we cannot make today: viz., that in encouraging education one is also encouraging religion and morality. But if morality and religion are really necessary for the happiness of mankind, then their prudent or wise encouragement must be a function of good government. In *Federalist 43* Madison writes that

> the transcendent law of nature and of nature's God . . . declares that the safety and happiness of society are the objects at which all political institutions aim, and to which all political institutions must be sacrificed.

Madison is here referring, of course, to the right of revolution announced in the Declaration of Independence. He is doing so to justify the usurpation of authority by the Constitutional Convention in going beyond its instructions from the Congress of the Confederation. But the argument applies in principle to whatever is essential either for "safety" or "happiness." It should be remembered, moreover, that the argument for disestablishment, in the Virginia Statute of Religious Liberty, is not an argument of indifference toward religion, but rather an argument for promoting purer religion. Certainly other means of encouraging religion—not inconsistent with this means—must also be permissible.

Article XVIII of the Bill of Rights of the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 is as follows:

> A frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles of the constitution, and a constant adherence to those of piety, justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality, are absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty, and to maintain a free government. The people ought, consequently, to have a particular attention to all those principles, in the choice of their officers and representatives: and they have a right to require of their lawgivers and magistrates an exact and constant observance of them, in the formation and execution of the laws necessary for the good administration of the commonwealth.

I cannot recall a more powerful assertion of the relationship between law and morality outside the Hebrew Bible. Where in the world Mr. Berns got the idea that the Framers' principles forbade the use of law to generate virtue, I cannot imagine. It is true, however, that if there is no virtue in the people, there cannot be virtue in the law that emanates from them. But it does no service to the cause, either of virtue or of freedom, to deny the connection between them so powerfully asserted by the theory no less than the practice of our founding.

HARRY V. JAFFA
Claremont, California

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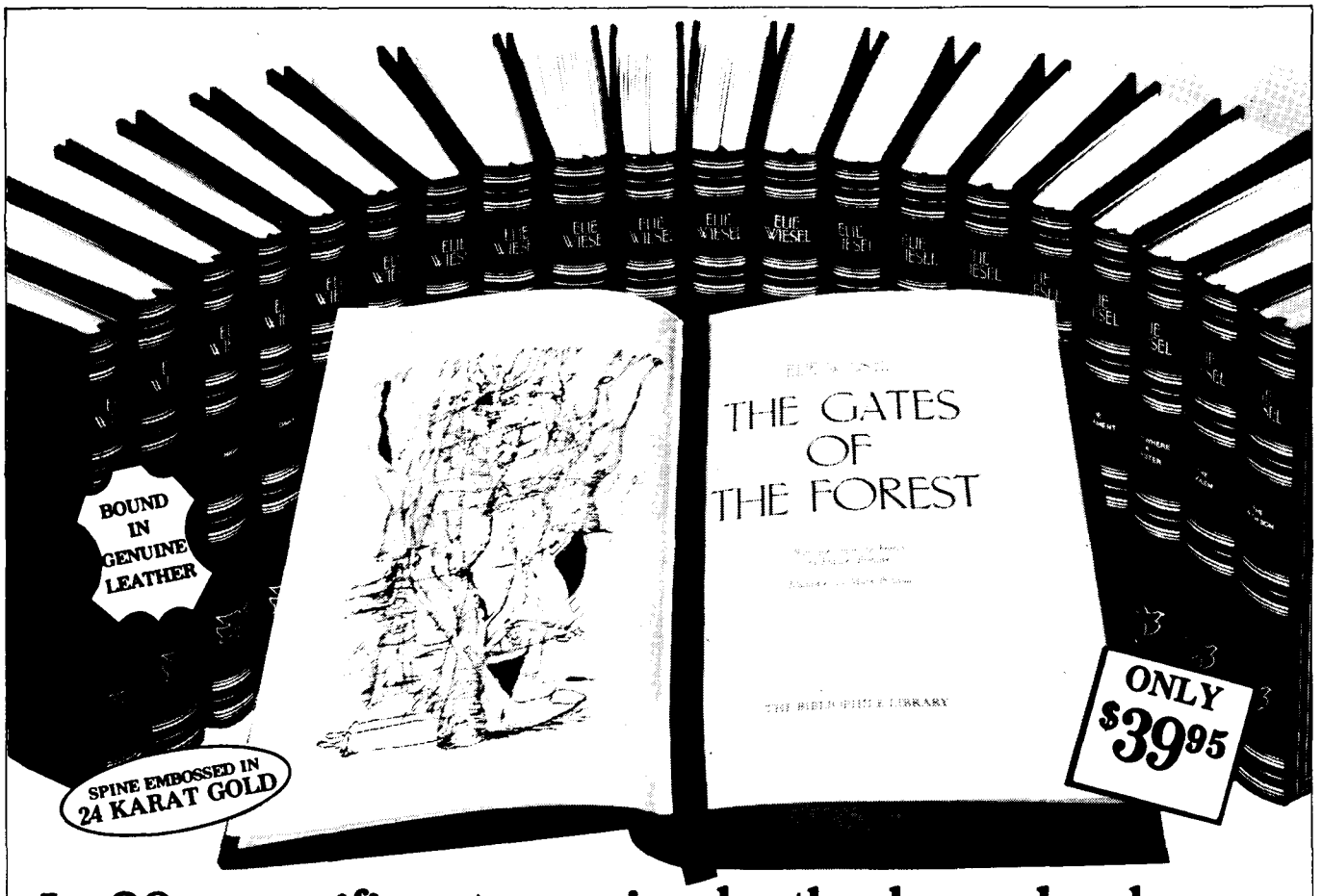

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WALTER BERNS writes:

I am grateful to Paul Wolfson for his thoughtful consideration of my argument. I must say, however, that, unlike him, I find nothing "ironic" in my reliance on the privilege-or-immunities clause combined with my "skepticism about the federal judiciary." My argument was that a literal reading of the text of the Fourteenth Amendment suggests that Congress, not the judiciary, was authorized to define the substance of these privileges and immunities. Acknowledging the argument, Mr. Wolfson goes on to say that there is no evidence—"no real support in the text of the Fourteenth Amendment"—to support it; I disagree, but shall not repeat what I wrote in the article or, at greater length, in the book from which the article was excerpted. I might say, however, as others have done before me, that there is in fact "no real support in the text of the Fourteenth Amendment" for the proposition favored by Mr. Wolfson, namely, that it was intended to incorporate the various provisions of the Bill of Rights. And where does all this leave us? Precisely in that "perilous" situation to which he refers in his last paragraph. But again, I appreciate his letter.

My thanks as well to Bryan Taplits and especially to Martin J. Plax for his excellent statement of what it means to say that democracy rests on the consent of the governed.

Harry V. Jaffa wonders "where in the world" I got my ideas about the founding principles. Well, I do not mind saying that I got them from, among others, the Harry V. Jaffa who wrote *The Crisis of the House Divided*. There he taught me that all the Founders "read the Declaration [of Independence] as an expression of the sentiments of Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government*"; that in "Locke's state of nature" men have rights but only "embryonic [rather than] genuine duties"; which means that "no man . . . is under an obligation to respect any other man's unalienable rights until that other man is necessary to the security of his own rights"; that this priority of rights over duties gives rise to a political problem for which Jefferson (whose attempted remedy was "vitiated by his Lockean horizon") had no solution and which Abraham Lincoln attempted to solve by promulgating a "political religion," a political religion based on his "subtle reinterpretation" of the Declaration, or on his "creative" interpretation which may not have been "impeccable historically" but was politically salutary. In short, Mr. Jaffa taught me—and unlike him I remain convinced of its truth—that something had to be added to the Declaration to make it safe for the world, so to speak. That this is so is evident in what Mr. Jaffa says by way of explaining it:

> All men admittedly have a *right* to liberty by the doctrine of the Declaration. But so does every man have a right to life. Now, if we conceive these rights as operative within the Lockean state of nature, we will immediately see that no man is under any necessary obligation to respect any other man's rights. For example: because I have a right to life, I have a right to kill any man whom I have reason to believe might kill me. That is, I have no obligation to respect the other man's right to life until he has given me adequate pledges that he will not try to kill me.

Mr. Jaffa taxes me for saying that, in theory, the country was founded by self-interested men "who acted in order to secure their private rights," but, as the above statement demonstrates, in 1959 he was of the same opinion. What caused him to change his mind—indeed, what caused him quietly to renounce the work on which his good reputation was based—used to be a matter of some concern among his former friends.

Latin America

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As one who grew up in a home where COMMENTARY was avidly read every month, I was very glad to hear that my book, *Partners in Conflict: The United States and Latin America*, had been mentioned by George Russell in "Can the Sandinistas Still Be Stopped?" [July]. But I was keenly disappointed when I read his discussion of my work and that of several others on contemporary U.S.-Latin American relations.

Perhaps I should take some comfort from the fact that Mr. Russell apparently found my book relatively sophisticated and clearly written compared with the others he pans. But I believe the various authors Mr. Russell discusses—and especially the readers of COMMENTARY—deserve a more accurate and less polemical treatment of these works. Among the inaccuracies in Mr. Russell's discussion of my own book are the following:

1. I do not "hail" the decline of U.S. preponderance in Latin America, but rather describe and analyze a trend that Mr. Russell agrees is central to contemporary inter-American relations. I do not discuss the record of U.S. interventions in Latin America in terms of "sin" or even of "blame," but rather analyze a repeated pattern of behavior that I point out has been less effective and less feasible over time as a means of protecting U.S. interests.

2. I do not ignore the intervention in Grenada, nor do I fail to discuss the political and economic progress in the Dominican Republic since 1965; indeed, I highlight both these points, albeit briefly, within the space of a 200-page book.

3. Although I am frankly critical of the Reagan administration's policies toward Latin America, and particularly of its obsessive focus on Nicaragua, I do not think it can fairly be stated, as Mr. Russell does, that I "drastically oversimplify" the Reagan policies. I discuss the evolution of these policies since 1981, including support for Latin America's democratic openings (after an earlier flirtation with authoritarian regimes) and the turn toward more responsive economic policies epitomized by the Baker Plan of 1985 (after an earlier rejection of the approaches Secretary Baker finally advanced). Mr. Russell's thesis that the Reagan policies toward Latin America were more extreme at first but moderated over time (except for policy toward Nicaragua) is one I advanced in *Foreign Policy* in 1983. The exception of Nicaragua was one I noted then, and Mr. Russell confirms it now; it is no minor exception, however.

The fundamental difference between Mr. Russell and myself, I believe, does not depend on distorting my argument, but is worth more thoughtful and extended discussion. I argue that the security and stability of the Americas are more deeply and directly threatened by Latin America's economic and social difficulties—and by the implications of these difficulties for U.S. banks and exporters, for migration, and for the capacity to solve shared international problems—than by the internal strug-

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gles in the small countries of Central America. Mr. Russell finds this argument overly abstract and reasserts that "real security concerns" in Central America are still the primary issue. Exploring this disagreement more fully would, in my view, have made for an informative and illuminating article.

ABRAHAM F. LOWENTHAL
School of International Relations
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

GEORGE RUSSELL writes:

I regret Abraham F. Lowenthal's disappointment. But, obviously, I regretted the principal thrust of his arguments in *Partners in Conflict* even more. I do not think those arguments were distorted in my article, and, in fact, Mr. Lowenthal does not contest my main points. But he fails to get one of them right.

I did not mean "hail" in the sense of "applaud" when discussing his assertion of the decline of U.S. preponderance in Latin America. (In fact, I agreed with his statement.) But he clearly means something akin to positive recognition of this trend, for he says elsewhere that "every U.S. approach toward Latin America in the last generation has foundered in part because it failed to take account of how much Latin America has changed. . . . The Reagan approach has largely disregarded Latin America's evolution and sought to reimpose U.S. predominance." It seems to me that my terms are fair comment on Mr. Lowenthal's approach, although, of course, they alter the tone of value-neutrality that he is anxious to preserve. That tone is important because, as I noted in my article, Mr. Lowenthal's argument in *Partners* largely proceeds through a series of false dichotomies in which the point is to make the analysis *sound* Olympian, even when it is frequently one-sided.

Mr. Lowenthal is correct about Grenada and the Dominican Republic, and I apologize. His account of the Grenada intervention takes up eight lines of text in his 200-page book; there are two complete sentences, and parts of two others, on the Dominican Republic intervention and its aftermath. The point is, though, that on occasion the application of U.S. military force has led to conditions of democracy and even of relative stability; one does not have to be a miltarist to consider this worth discussing at greater length.

For some oversimplification about the Reagan administration, see the statement from *Partners* quoted above. A considerable problem for all sober discussions of Latin America is the abuse of synecdoche: by extension, for example, the need to factor military considerations into foreign-policy concerns in Central America becomes in rhetoric a militarization of U.S. relationships with all of Latin America. I did *not* say that " 'real security concerns' in Central America are still the primary issue." Quite the contrary. I said that the Reagan administration, whose policies toward Latin America are by no means the best that ever will be achieved, has done more to address the issues of trade, debt, and immigration that Mr. Lowenthal

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deems fundamental than he wants to admit. And that a discussion of U.S. policy and interest in the hemisphere which considers "real security concerns" to be outmoded, as Mr. Lowenthal's explicitly does, is abstract, one-sided, and tailored more to U.S. partisan political jousting than to a thoroughly searching analysis of what American policy in Latin American is, or ought to be.

Pornography

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In recalling "The Pornography Report That Never Was" [August], Terry Teachout is quite correct in noting that seldom has any report so little read been so much criticized. But while he has obviously taken the time to read the report, his bilious tone of high moral fervor seems to sweep him right past the actual perspective and message of the report.

Mr. Teachout mentions two facts in passing which seem to me central in understanding the real message of the report. First, "the city of Cincinnati has no adult bookstores, no X-rated movies, no massage parlors, no adult movies on cable television, and no go-go dancers." Second, "the Supreme Court . . . has consistently held, even in *Memoirs*, that obscene material can legitimately be suppressed by the state." So repressing obscenity is recognized as constitutional, and in the 38th largest city of the country, with 370,000 people, that standard can be broadly enforced and upheld without being overturned by the courts.

In short, the Meese Commission report explains the reach of obscenity law and applauds how that law is applied in some communities like Cincinnati. The report can be read as a recommendation that other communities go and do likewise.

By contrast, Mr. Teachout's position on the issue is a muddle. He is upset with the Supreme Court because it ruled that pornography (defined as the depiction of erotic material) is not always obscene whenever a state says so, although he apparently does not want the state to have that sort of unbridled power and he does not favor "a constitutional amendment banning the sale of literature portraying sexual activity." He is upset that the commission did not boldly advocate "censorship," even though using the word would have obscured the fact that free speech in the constitutional sense can coexist with suppressing obscenity. Further, using the word "censorship" would have played into the hands of the critics of the report. . . .

He complains that the obscenity report was not written with the kind of fervor that would cause marines to storm a beach, but explains that "thousands of troubled families" are reading the report and "growing angrier by the minute," and worries that "extremism" could prevail on this issue. He wanted the commission either to attack or eschew social-science evidence . . . rather than using the evidence that exists, imperfect though it may be, to allow people to admit that what they know in their hearts about the evils of obscenity is indeed true.

Perhaps strangest of all, Mr. Teachout argues that a report written as he would have liked "might well have led to a major rethinking of American cultural attitudes toward obscenity." It is the wildest sort of pipe dream to believe that any government report could accomplish that result, especially on a topic where most of those who need to be persuaded of the evils of obscenity are never going to listen to any Reagan administration official telling them so.

Frankly, I do not know how to disentangle all these conflicting points of view. Mr. Teachout seems so desperate to blame obscenity on the Warren Court or on the moral climate of the 1960's or on liberal political philosophy or on the inadequacies of social science that his criticism misses the report itself almost completely. I agree with him in that I would have preferred to see the commission emphasize the moral case for enforcing obscenity laws, both from the standpoint of the affected community and from the standpoint of protecting those whom the obscenity business exploits and abuses. But the report made a powerful and valid point that Mr. Teachout seems unwilling to recognize.

The Warren Court interpretation of the First Amendment, as well as other amendments, allows states to ban obscene material. That standard offers no danger at all that *Ulysses* or *Lolita* or *Lady Chatterley's Lover* will be banned. In fact, it offers no danger that *Playboy* or *Penthouse* will be banned either, as the commission openly admits. But the standard is strong enough to go after the worst of pornography, and the experience of various communities shows that those standards are enforceable when the people of the community want them to be.

Mr. Teachout ends by calling for a middle ground between the First Amendment absolutism that would allow all obscenity and the prior-restraint philosophy that would allow the state to ban anything it did not like, using obscenity as an excuse. The report of the Meese Commission does a respectable job of arguing for exactly such a middle ground and of showing how it could work under current law. In the end, Mr. Teachout seems upset mainly by the fact that the report was not in words of his choosing. But that is his own personal tragedy, of little consequence to the many good points made by the report.

TIMOTHY TAYLOR
Cranbury, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Terry Teachout's article on the Meese Commission report is one of the most wretched that has ever appeared in COMMENTARY. Terrified by the attacks on the First Amendment by the fundamentalist Right and the radical Left, he begs us to accept partial censorship while there is still time to avoid total censorship, for the enemies of liberty are too powerful to be resisted, But we can look on the bright side: a partial—liberal, nonrepressive—censorship will be good for us, and will satisfy the just interests of the moral dictators, who will then have no further demands to make upon the Bill of Rights. The whole article drips with defeatism and appeasement. . . .

It is true that there is now a broad and determined assault on freedom of speech and the press, led by Andrea Dworkin, Donald Wildmon, Randall Kennedy, and Barbara Foley (to name only a few), and supported by the fundamentalist Baptists of the South and the Left-liberal colleges and universities of the North. But they are divided among themselves and do not command anything like a majority of the American people. . . .

The proper response to the extremists is resolution, not the pusillanimous vacillation of a Terry Teachout; it is the assertion that the Constitution means exactly

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what it says, not the foggy, oxymoronic proposition that if we "interpret" the First Amendment cleverly enough we can have censorship and freedom of speech too. As a conservative libertarian, I am indeed appalled at the totalitarian drift of American political and social thought, especially as represented by the federal judiciary and the liberal professoriate. But I believe that this drift can be reversed, and also that it is more honorable to resist it than to capitulate to it.

Some statements in the article require comment:

1. The tests presented in *Miller* v. *California* are neither clear nor coherent but are subjective to the point of arbitrariness. "Contemporary standards," as the *Carnal Knowledge* case showed, are whatever the Supreme Court tells the community they are, and obscenity, as the Meese Commission report openly defines it, is whatever the federal courts decide is obscenity. (They know it when they see it.) If you like arbitrary government, you'll love *Miller*.

2. Censorship is defined strictly as the prior restraint of publication. This definition is far too narrow. If COMMENTARY could be published without prior restraint, but the state could confiscate the press run, prohibit its transportation, sale, and purchase, and imprison everybody connected with it, it is just possible that even Mr. Teachout would suspect that some form of censorship was being practiced. Besides, the likelihood of prosecution is in itself a form of prior restraint. . . .

Censorship is better defined as the suppression of spoken, written, or pictorial materials, whether before or after publication, usually on the grounds that such materials are dangerous to the state or society—in the opinion of those who claim to speak in the name of the state or society.

3. The First Amendment, as its unambiguous wording shows, was indeed intended to be absolute. . . . It originally applied, however, solely to the federal government; Congress could not suppress anything, but the states could and did. If the Fourteenth Amendment extended the provisions of the Bill of Rights to the states, as nearly everyone agrees that it did, then the effect was not to extend the practice of the states to the federal government but to extend the absolute nature of the First Amendment to the states. If the federal courts have never accepted this proposition, it is probably because it directly conflicts with their claim, as interpreters of the Constitution, to decide for us what our rights are, and to what extent we are permitted to enjoy them.

4. "Liberals and moderates [are] now convinced of the disastrous effects of the liberalization of obscenity law. . . ." What has convinced them? Do they rely on the findings of social scientists, whose conclusions Mr. Teachout holds in such well-merited contempt? Or do they blindly blame all the ills of modern society—drug abuse, child abuse, teen-age pregnancy, AIDS, etc.—on pornography? On what grounds? What disaster does Mr. Teachout consider to have been caused by pornography?

If liberals and moderates really think that sexual permissiveness is the root of all evil, they had better think through their attitude toward censorship, for hardcore pornography, their principal target, has had almost no effect on determining public attitudes or habits. Adolescents, for example, never see *Deep Throat*; they do see soap operas. They know nothing of Seka, the pornographic movie star; they read all about Princess Caroline and Tatum O'Neal. So, to be effective, censorship would have to be applied to all forms of expression, spoken, sung, written, or pictorial, right across the board. That, of course, is just what the extremists want, and that is the position to which Mr. Teachout will be inexorably driven if he follows the logic of his own argument.

5. Regardless of Mr. Teachout's ingenious analysis, I myself believe that the Meese Commission did not recommend censorship for two reasons: first, unlike Irving Kristol, they did not have the intellectual honesty and moral courage to do so; and, second, they knew that existing evasions of the First Amendment (92 of which they specify) will succeed, as they have in Cincinnati and Jacksonville, in accomplishing the purposes of censorship while at the same time allowing them to claim that no censorship exists. . . .

I applaud Irving Kristol's honesty. We are enemies on the subject of censorship, but at least each of us knows where the other stands, and can debate it without hypocrisy. For the intellectual flaccidity of . . . Terry Teachout, however, there is nothing at all to be said.

LEE R. JOHNSON
Memphis, Tennessee

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Terry Teachout offers many astute observations and compelling remarks in his article, yet I reacted without sympathy and even with some hostility to his extreme disdain of the views of the late Justice William Douglas on so-called "obscenity" or "pornography." In my view, the idea that the First Amendment is to be read literally and that allegedly "obscene" materials are constitutionally protected by the First Amendment are not absurd or ill-considered notions. On the contrary, a literal reading of the First Amendment may go a long way toward protecting members of our society from the oppressive hand of would-be censors.

Critics who castigate those who uphold a literal reading of the First Amendment would be wise to bear in mind that there is no divine law which restricts the work of censors to the field of pornography. Today, the target of the censors might be pornography; tomorrow, the target could be particular religious groups or political organizations. The Douglas view of the First Amendment, at least in my opinion, goes a long way toward protecting Americans from encroachments upon our fundamental freedoms in the area of free speech as well as in other spheres. To ridicule and abandon this view may lead to an erosion of our basic freedoms and usher in an era of censorship and repression of freedom.

LEO UZYCH
Wallingford, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am one of those whom Terry Teachout describes as being "deeply concerned about the spread of pornography, and growing angrier by the minute." . . .

A scholarly expert on child pornography, Dr. Ann Burgess of the Boston University School of Nursing, estimates that there are nearly 280 magazines on the market dealing solely with child pornography, and, of these, 275 are published monthly. . . . And Dr. Elizabeth Holland, a physician who treats child-abuse victims in her private practice and finds many involved in pornography, says, "I can cure their venereal disease, I can stitch

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up the lacerations and put ointments on the wounds, but I can't touch the damage and the scars that have been inflicted on the minds and hearts and spirits of these little ones."

Yet how much do we worry about pornography? Too many Americans regard it indifferently, either as other people's private vices, or as the price we must pay for free speech. But the Constitution does not protect obscenity, and "private" vices have swiftly become a public menace. Pornography threatens our families and our children. . . .

NOREEN MOCSNY, R.N.
Cincinnati, Ohio

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

To begin with, it is Timothy Taylor who has garbled "the actual perspective and message" of both the Meese Commission report and my article.

The *Miller* obscenity test, as Mr. Taylor correctly points out, makes it possible for the city of Cincinnati to regulate the sale of obscene material. Why, then, haven't other communities followed suit? That is what my article was about, and the intellectually impoverished arguments of the Meese Commission seem to me suggestive of the answer to this critical question.

Mr. Taylor notwithstanding, the Meese Commission report is not primarily an explication of "the reach of obscenity law." It is, rather, an apologia for obscenity law, an attempt to show why obscene material should be regulated. Such an apologia has become necessary because of the extent to which the Warren Court's rulings on obscenity contributed to the undermining of the earlier consensus that made the control of pornography both legally and socially acceptable.

Unfortunately, the Meese Commission failed to provide a persuasive rationale for controlling the sale of pornography. Social-science evidence is neither a sufficiently compelling nor a philosophically acceptable justification of the obscenity laws. Why does this matter? Because it is impossible for a society to control obscenity unless it believes that it is right and proper to do so. The American people, in no small part because of the Warren Court's obscenity decisions, no longer seem to believe that "what they know in their hearts about the evils of obscenity is indeed true." That is why we have so few Cincinnatis and so many Times Squares.

With regard to Lee R. Johnson's letter, I should point out that the term "conservative libertarian" is an oxymoron. Libertarians and conservatives, as Mr. Johnson amply demonstrates, differ on first principles. While the two groups frequently (and usefully) agree on specific questions of policy, these agreements are largely serendipitous. For me to argue the merits of an article about censorship with Mr. Johnson would be like arguing with a Martian about which smells better, methane or oxygen.

Finally, anyone who thinks that "The First Amendment, as its unambiguous wording shows, was indeed intended to be absolute" simply does not understand the problems of constitutional interpretation involved. The Framers, as legal scholars have demonstrated over and over again, did not intend a Douglas-like "absolute" reading of the First Amendment. That the original intentions of the Framers should be honored by the courts is the whole point of the doctrine of interpretivism. For Mr. Johnson and Leo Uzych to argue that the First Amendment should be read literally is both a legal perversity and an intellectual analogue of the radical individualism which underlies libertarian thought. But that is another article.

Europe & the Sandinistas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The only common thread I can discern in the attitudes of the Europeans described by Mark Falcoff in "Why Europeans Support the Sandinistas" [August] is a rather spiteful anti-U.S. animus. Anything that will annoy the United States has got to be the right thing, never mind the long-term consequences.

I have just one question for Mr. Falcoff. In his comments on France he uses the phrase, "a 'libertarian Left' . . . socialism." This puzzles me; is it perhaps a sort of oxymoron? It sounds attractive, but I would like to know just what it means.

CHARLES H. CHANDLER
Malden, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mark Falcoff points out in his article that Sweden's Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, Pierre Schiori, "has taken Nicaragua under his wing."

On the other hand, Schiori deserves credit for having persuaded Fidel Castro to allow the dissident poet Angel Cuadra to leave Cuba in 1985. Cuadra had spent fifteen years in prison and had been adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. He had also been named an honorary member of Sweden's PEN Club.

Upon his release from prison in 1982, Cuadra was repeatedly denied an exit visa. Finally, Schiori went to Cuba and asked Castro to give the poet permission to leave the country. A few months later, Cuadra was able to take a plane to Europe. He went to Sweden and thanked Schiori personally for his help.

ROGER REED
Lausanne, Switzerland

MARK FALCOFF writes:

Charles H. Chandler is not wrong about the underlying thread which holds together European attitudes about Central America, or, rather, U.S. policy and interests there. What this says about the prospects for the survival of the North Atlantic alliance must be left to the evaluation of others more versed in European affairs than I.

While I am not personally sympathetic to socialism, I recognize that there are some socialists who value intellectual and political liberty so highly that they would rather compromise their stated goals of economic equality to preserve it. It was in this context that I used the term "libertarian." Unfortunately, there are not enough socialists like this nowadays, but the term itself is not an oxymoron. It describes many of the social-democratic leaders of Western Europe in the postwar period. The difference is that these people believed their values indivisible—applicable everywhere in the world—whereas their successors subscribe to a sort of double standard, or as Marx himself might put it, an international division of labor. Within this framework, it is the task of the West to develop in freedom, the Third World to actualize the dark side of the socialist dream. Thus the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Salvadoran peoples must fall into Communism to compensate Western European socialists for having to exchange their revolutionary

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dreams for bourgeois comforts at home.

I am glad to learn from Roger Reed of Pierre Schiori's role in the case of Angel Cuadra. Up till now I knew only of his refusal to aid Mrs. Armando Valladares when she sought Western European support for her husband—also a long-term political prisoner in Cuba. As Valladares relates in his book, *Against All Hope*, Schiori on that occasion lectured Mrs. Valladares on the virtues of what some would call "quiet diplomacy"—refusing to condemn the Cuban regime on the grounds that "that would be giving the Americans a publicity weapon." Of course, compassion in individual cases, however laudable, does not alter the record with regard to Pierre Schiori's evident commitment to the creation of systems in Latin America in which human-rights violations are permanent, massive, and systematic.

Pakistan & the West Bank

To the Editor of Commentary:

Daniel Pipes writes in his article, "Arab vs. Arab Over Palestine" [July], that Pakistan recognized the Jordanian annexation of the West Bank. I have disputed this oft-repeated assertion in my article, "Pakistan and the West Bank: A Research Note," *Middle Eastern Studies*, April 1983, and would be more than happy to be shown to be incorrect by Pipes.

Sanford R. Silverburg
Catawba College
Salisbury, North Carolina

Daniel Pipes writes:

If Pakistan did not recognize Jordanian annexation of the West Bank, as Sanford R. Silverburg suggests, this further reinforces the point in my article, namely, the disputed nature of the Jordanian act.

Cynthia Ozick

To the Editor of Commentary:

Robert Alter's "Defenders of the Faith" [July] yokes two fascinating novels, Philip Roth's *The Counterlife* and Cynthia Ozick's *The Messiah of Stockholm*. In considering them both to be about writing and Jewish identity, however, Mr. Alter not only ignores the obvious links, which he calls "tenuous," of *The Messiah of Stockholm* to Miss Ozick's previous fiction, but he denies her novel's profoundly felt psychological observations anchored in the very metaphors he construes as "extravagant." Then to claim the absence of "psychological density" as part of a "cluster of deficiencies" is to have brought to Miss Ozick's novel an acerbic attitude absent in his cogent and objective examination of *The Counterlife*.

The unfortunate label "intransigent polemicist" which he attaches to Miss Ozick leads him to assert, mistakenly, that "so much of what she cares about is missing from this book." In fact, everything that she cares about is present in her latest novel: her complex view of literature as idolatrous, her important view of parochialism, her conviction that the past has meaning. These are themes Miss Ozick has explored in depth in both her fiction and her criticism, from various perspectives and with different emotional intensity. . . .

A case in point, the example Mr. Alter cites as a deficiency and as a change in Miss Ozick's writing, is Lars Andemening's obsession with the "power of literature." The psychological and intellectual density Miss Ozick gives Lars's obsession need not have eluded a critic so shrewd as Mr. Alter; coincidentally, that obsession is a moving counterpart to Roth's dedication to his father. Lars Andemening's obsession is not merely cerebral; surely, no obsession is. Miss Ozick consciously selected for Lars's *idée fixe* the belief that he was Bruno Schulz's son. Schulz, a Central European writer murdered by the Nazis, revealed in his stories an obsessive sense of his own father's domination, which left him powerless to leave Drohobycz, where he died. That cannot be accidental. Indeed, Miss Ozick's choice alerts us to Lars's central problem, a tragedy of Jewish history and a universally painful one—the deprivation of a father, the loss of a people.

Robbed of these human needs and all that they mean emotionally, Lars's fabrication of a father, his abandonment of himself to his own fantasy, his agonizing confrontation with its loss—these are powerfully realized psychological verities, deeply felt, hauntingly rendered. And these themes are rooted in Miss Ozick's critical essays and in her fiction, from her first published novel, *Trust*, onward. *The Messiah of Stockholm*, her latest meditation on these concerns, takes a new turn; and in it Miss Ozick grapples, as Roth does, with "what it means to be a Jew," what it means to be a writer or a critic of fiction, what it means to be responsible to Jewish literature. So Lars's obsession is complex, and its significance transcends the merely personal, the merely literary. The result is not a novel that is Miss Ozick's "first pervasively 'Gentile' fiction" (a puzzling remark since the four main characters in *The Messiah of Stockholm* are Jews); it is the novel of a mature writer working with her admittedly intense concerns on a different level. The "thinness of novelistic imagination" Mr. Alter detects could not conceive, let alone realize, a character whose poignancy mirrors both fundamental human experience and a "sense of real history." If Miss Ozick had enacted her fiction in Israel, would Mr. Alter have found that more evidence of her intransigency?

Elaine M. Kauvar
Baruch College, CUNY
New York City

Robert Alter writes:

I am afraid that Elaine M. Kauvar and I have little to say to each other because our responses as readers to *The Messiah of Stockholm* are so different. Lars Andemening strikes me as no more than an interesting idea, not the seat of "powerfully realized psychological verities," and Miss Kauvar's letter, beyond the flourishing of celebratory phrases, does nothing to demonstrate the truth of her reading. As for Cynthia Ozick's view of literature as idolatrous, it is passionately held but hardly complex, or, indeed, hardly warranted by the long and at some points quite literary cultural history of the Jews.

Dialogue

To the Editor of Commentary:

My good friend and colleague in the dialogue, Rabbi Balfour Brickner, once quipped that there were some in his community who have a difficult time taking yes for an answer. The theological dialogue (and that is what it is) between Howard Singer and myself on the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council's statement on the Jews would seem to be a case in point [Letters from Readers, September, commenting on Mr. Singer's article, "The Rise and Fall of Interfaith Dialogue," May].

Mr. Singer's position appears to

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be that despite the Catholic Church's own official teachings to the contrary, supersessionism is "central" to Christian doctrine, and therefore that it is what we mean no matter what we say. My position is that Mr. Singer, gently put, is wrong in his understanding of Catholic doctrine.

One of the essential rules of interreligious relations is that each partner alone has the right to define his or her own position. Mr. Singer's attempt to tell Catholics what they believe violates that principle, no less than the old Christian "teaching of contempt" did with regard to Judaism.

The Catholic Church does *not* teach that Christianity has "superseded" Judaism or replaced it in God's design. So, yes, Judaism is "a suitable and proper witness" to God; and, yes, Judaism "carries God's approval," and, yes, "Judaism in some sense has always been a, if not the, true faith." These matters, which have long since been resolved in the dialogue, present no difficulties in belief for devout Catholics today, Mr. Singer's no notwithstanding.

Pope John Paul II, speaking to representatives of the Polish Jewish community in Warsaw, mentioned just one aspect of Judaism's continuing "mission in the contemporary world." Speaking of the Jewish people's memory of the Holocaust, and uniting his voice with it, the Pope declared: "You have become a loud warning voice for all humanity . . . a saving warning. In this sense you continue your particular vocation, showing yourselves to be still heirs of that election . . ." (June 14, 1987). This deeply moving declaration, I would submit, is unambiguous. It is also a result of theological dialogue and reflection.

Mr. Singer questions how we can hold such a position regarding Judaism's validity and still proclaim, in the words of the Second Vatican Council, "the Cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows." If one believes in the incarnation (as Christians must), the logical dilemma Mr. Singer poses is only an apparent one.

God alone saves. On this Judaism and Christianity agree. But for us Christians, Jesus is "one in Being with the Father," as our creed states. The affirmation concerning "the Cross" is comprehensible, then, within the context of the doctrines of the incarnation and the resurrection.

These affirmations, it should be carefully noted, are not affirmations about the institutional Church or membership in it, any more than the Jewish affirmation of Zechariah 14:9 ("The Lord shall become King over the whole earth; on that day the Lord shall be the only one, and His name the only one") is an affirmation concerning membership in the Jewish people. Indeed, both have an eschatological dimension that makes them essentially comparable in the hope and faith they express.

Mr. Singer once again has raised issues that can only be dealt with properly through in-depth theological dialogue. Will he say yes to it? Or does he prefer Jews and Catholics to remain in mutual ignorance of one another's beliefs? That is the central issue of our exchange.

EUGENE J. FISHER
Executive Secretary
National Conference of
Catholic Bishops
Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish
Relations
Washington, D.C.

HOWARD SINGER writes:

Eugene J. Fisher deliberately avoids confronting what I wrote. I wrote that interfaith "dialogue" will not win the respect of most Jews until the results go beyond theological declarations and affect the larger issues and events of the contemporary world. I wrote that despite benevolent statements issued by Christian groups, "comparatively little appears to have changed in practice." I wrote that the language of theology is a morass of ambiguities permitting all sorts of woolly contradictions, thus requiring unpersuasive supplementary "clarifications" and guidelines. I wrote that, for all these reasons, many Jews suspect that the old, officially repudiated ideas still linger under the surface. I pointed to the Vatican's apparent reluctance to recognize Israel as an example of what stirs Jewish doubts. Mr. Fisher refuses to respond to any of this and simply accuses me of "not taking yes for an answer" and trying to tell Catholics what they believe.

Mr. Fisher would narrow the "central issue" of dialogue to the question of whether Jews and Catholics will remain ignorant of one another's beliefs. But most Jews are perfectly content to remain ignorant of Catholic theology (and, if the truth be told, of their own). Most Jews feel the only important issue is whether the Christian effort to right an ancient wrong (by disseminating more humane attitudes toward Judaism and Jews) will ever get beyond formal declarations. The problem is that Mr. Fisher thinks of theological declarations as sufficient unto themselves, while Jews see such declarations merely as statements of good intentions, not yet followed by deeds.

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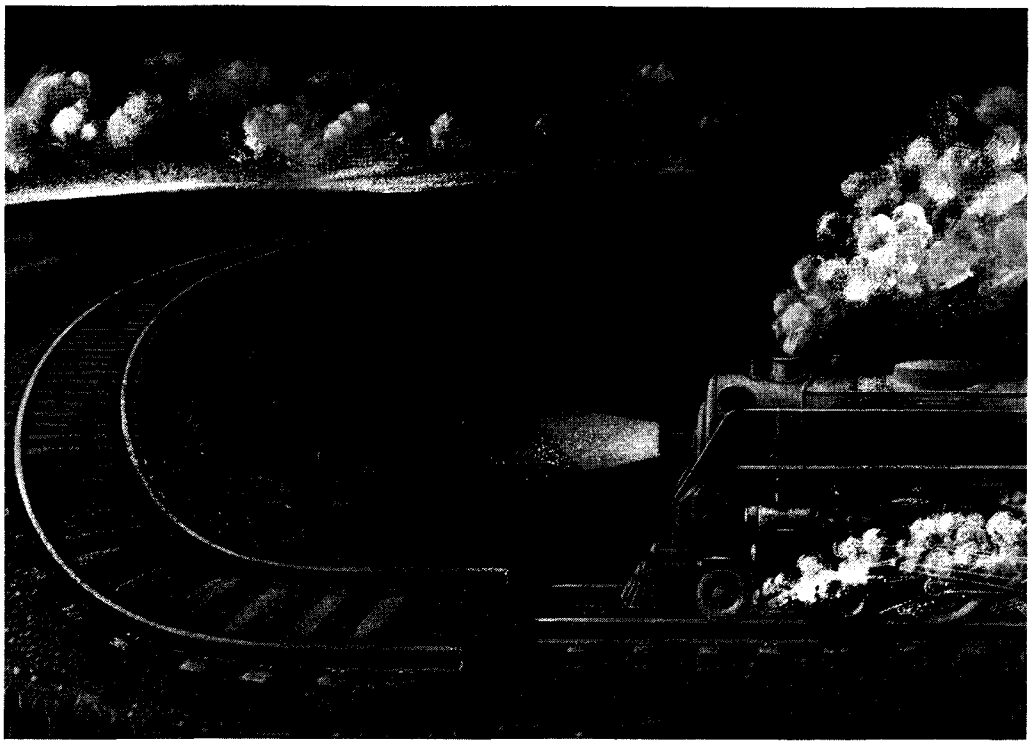
Issues of the Information Age:

The way beyond Babel.



Imagine trying to build a railroad system if every locomotive manufacturer used a different track gauge. Every local stretch of railroad had its own code of signals. And in order to ride a train, you needed to know the gauges and the signals and the switching procedures and the route and the conductor's odd pronunciation of the station names.

The business of moving and managing information is in a similar state today. Machines can't always talk to each other. Proprietary systems and networks abound, with suppliers often jockeying to make theirs the de facto standard. The enormous potential of the Information Age is being dissipated by incompatibility.

The solution, as we see it, is common standards which would allow electronic systems in one or many locations to work together. People will be informed and in control, while the systems exchange, process, and act on information automatically.

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AIDS: Are Heterosexuals at Risk?

Michael A. Fumento

AIDS, we have been told, is not just a "gay disease," or a disease of intravenous (IV) drug abusers passing contaminated needles. It can break out into the general heterosexual population at any time, and when it does it will become (in the words of one concerned clergyman) "a national disaster as great as a thermonuclear war." Indeed, to judge by a poll taken last May indicating that AIDS has replaced cancer as the nation's most feared disease, it would seem that most Americans believe the "breakout" has already occurred.

Well they might, if they have been following the lead of our major newsmagazines:

Newsweek, April 18, 1983: "AIDS is creeping out of its well-defined, epidemiological confines. . . ."

Life, July 1985 (cover): "Now No One Is Safe From AIDS."

Time, August 12, 1985: ". . . the threat to heterosexuals appears to be growing."

U.S. News & World Report, January 12, 1987: "The disease of them is suddenly the disease of *us*. The slow death presumed just a few years ago to be confined to homosexuals, Haitians, and hemophiliacs is now a plague of the mainstream, finding fertile growth among heterosexuals."

Time, February 16, 1987: "The proportion of heterosexual cases . . . is increasing at a worrisome rate. . . . The numbers as yet are small, but AIDS is a growing threat to the heterosexual population."

U.S. News & World Report, April 20, 1987: "Now, however, the disease is spreading so rapidly beyond homosexuals and drug abusers that the old rules no longer apply."

U.S. News & World Report, June 15, 1987: "With an approximate seven-to-ten year latency period before the symptoms become evident, compelling evidence of a breakout of AIDS may come too late. That's a 'breakout' into what the government calls 'the general population.' That's you, Mr. President. That's heterosexuals. Put most simply: AIDS is a fatal disease—always—and *everyone* is at risk."

Most articles like the ones from which these quotations come tend to begin with anecdotes, then to add a few statistics showing that the incidence of AIDS among heterosexuals has doubled in the past two years, then to cite experts predicting the rate will soon rise much higher.

Clearly such articles have taken their toll in terror, as clinics that test for the AIDS Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) have reported being swamped by heterosexuals. Yet the very figures used to demonstrate the supposed spread of AIDS into the general population also happen to illustrate the old saying about lies, damned lies, and statistics.

Thus, we may read that heterosexual AIDS victims at one time comprised 2 percent of the total, but that this figure has now doubled to 4, and that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta predict that by 1991 it will have increased to 9 percent. What we are not told is that the jump from 2 to 4 percent came about not through an increase in the number of victims but by a lumping together of two different categories of victim which had previously been kept distinct—native-born Americans (2 percent) and Africans and Haitians who have recently moved to the United States.

CDC originally classified the recently arrived Africans and Haitians as a separate category unto themselves, because it appeared that the disease was following a different pattern in their native countries from that in the United States. As the classification turned into a stereotype, however, the Haitian government lobbied the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a subunit of the U.S. Public Health Service, to "redesignate" this category. At first the Haitian-African groups were shifted to the cases labeled "undetermined." But in July 1986 CDC arbitrarily placed them into the heterosexual category—despite strong evidence that many of the Haitians probably acquired the illness homosexually and that much of the transmission among Africans was also not attributable to heterosexual activity. The supposed 100-percent

MICHAEL A. FUMENTO, a new contributor, is a journalist who has written for *Policy Review*, *National Review*, and other magazines of opinion.

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jump from 2 to 4 percent in the number of heterosexual transmissions was thus nothing more than a statistical artifact.

As for the figure of 9 percent, this comes from the Coolfont conference held in June 1986. Within four months of that conference, two papers presented at it were released in *Public Health Reports*. One, by CDC's chief statistician Meade Morgan and CDC's AIDS program director James Curran, predicted that by 1991 the heterosexual-transmission category will have increased from 4 to 5.3 percent. The other, published anonymously but under the official title of "The Coolfont Report," put the percentage at 9. The media have almost universally ignored the lower in favor of the much more ominous higher figure.

This 9-percent figure, however, includes an entirely new set of cases, those in which the origin of exposure is unexplained. In this category are patients who either have no idea what the source of contact was, blame prostitutes, refuse to be interviewed, or have died. Because some scientists think a portion of these unexplained cases is attributable to heterosexual contact, the statistician who created the 9-percent figure simply aggregated them all to form a "worst-case" projection. Yet how many, if any, of the unexplained cases belong in the heterosexual category is surely debatable, and the fact that our public-health authorities would classify *all* as heterosexual transmissions is, to put it mildly, curious. When I asked Dr. Morgan about this he replied that "the report was prepared in only a day and a half to two days," that "it was probably an omission" not to state explicitly that cases of undetermined origin had been lumped together with the heterosexuals, but that "if somebody called we'd set them straight." Virtually no one has called.

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop is among those who have asserted that AIDS is "exploding" into the heterosexual population. In one magazine interview he estimated that AIDS cases overall were "going to increase ninefold between now and 1990. But among heterosexuals there are going to be twenty times as many cases, so that perhaps 10 percent of the patients will be heterosexual." He said that "the curve for heterosexuals contracting AIDS is going up more than twice as fast because they are not taking the precautions homosexuals have learned are essential." But the real reason the curve is going up "twice as fast" is to be sought elsewhere, in the aforementioned shoddy statistical practices.

The only plausible argument that has been offered for expecting an "explosion" into the heterosexual population rests on the fact that the average incubation period for the HIV infection to become either AIDS or AIDS-related complex (ARC)* is thought to be about five to seven years; hence, heretofore hidden infections contracted in 1982 might suddenly show up in 1987. But the word "average" means exactly that: the cases making up the average incubate in anywhere from several months to perhaps ten years or more. Hence, infectious contacts made in 1982 will show up a few percent a year each year up to and well past the five-year point, not suddenly and all at once.

This is why CDC's chief epidemiologist, Dr. Harold Jaffe, has stated that "Those who are suggesting that we are going to see an explosive spread of AIDS in the heterosexual population have to explain why this isn't happening." The question needs to be asked first of all of Dr. Jaffe's boss, the Surgeon General.

THE reason AIDS is not "exploding" is that, contrary to public belief, it is a disease that is extraordinarily difficult to transmit or contract, even by the standards of other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Whereas mere juxtaposition of genitalia is enough to transmit syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes simplex II, and chlamydia, all of which require only direct contact with the mucous membrane, HIV (like hepatitis B) is bloodborne, the most inefficient mode of transmission an STD can enjoy. A sore, even an undetectably small one such as often accompanies herpes, might offer a passageway for these viruses, but *some* sort of passageway is needed and in the case of most Americans such passageways do not exist.

Even where they do, moreover, AIDS is more difficult to contract than, for example, hepatitis B. Thus, while approximately 27 percent of hospital workers who have accidentally been stuck with hepatitis B-contaminated needles contract the disease, HIV infection occurs in less than 1 percent of those stuck with HIV-contaminated needles. One hapless worker who was stuck with a needle containing both the hepatitis B virus and HIV quickly developed the former but remained free of HIV-indicating antibodies.

That HIV is a bloodborne virus obviously explains the high incidence of AIDS among hemophiliacs and intravenous drug users who share needles, as well as among homosexuals. (Hepatitis B has also primarily plagued homosexuals and IV drug abusers, as opposed to heterosexuals. From 35 to 80 percent of homosexual men attending STD clinics, and 60 to 80 percent of IV drug users, are found to be carrying hepatitis B.)

Why homosexuals? Because with sexually-transmitted AIDS, the overwhelming risk factor, especially for the passive or recipient partner, is anal sex. According to B. Frank Polk, director of the Johns Hopkins University's component of the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study, "In gay men,

* ARC includes diseases that occur as a result of the weakened condition of the patient whose immunological system has been damaged by HIV.

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95 percent or more of the infections occur from receptive anal intercourse." A study published in the April 1987 *American Journal of Public Health* (*AJPH*) found that of 240 men who became infected over the course of the study, all but four had engaged in receptive anal sex.

The reason anal as opposed to vaginal sex is so dangerous has to do with the difference in tissue construction between the male urethra and rectum and the female vagina. While the vagina is constructed of tough platelike cells that resist rupture and infectious agents, and are designed to withstand the motions of intercourse and childbirth, the urethra and rectum are constructed primarily of columnar cells which tear or rupture easily. This allows semen to enter the more readily accessible blood vessels of the rectum or, conversely but much more rarely, allows blood from a ruptured rectum to seep into the urethra of the active partner. (The April 1987 *AJPH* study found that men who reported rectal bleeding were far more likely to become HIV-positive than those who did not.)

There are other factors in the AIDS-anal sex connection. The vagina provides natural lubrication, whereas there is little in the anus. Anal douching, a practice many homosexuals engage in prior to intercourse, can remove what lubrication there is. The absence of lubrication not only increases the chance of rupture, but at the same time it reduces the efficiency of condoms by allowing them to tear. For heterosexuals, condoms are extremely effective in preventing all forms of sexually transmissible diseases, from the nonlethal but bothersome and incurable herpes simplex II to the deadly AIDS virus. But even the condom, which many have touted as the way to turn unsafe homosexual sex into safe sex, has an alarmingly high breakdown rate during anal intercourse. According to one Australian study reported in the July 1987 *AJPH*, 27 percent of homosexuals using condoms reported "a few" or "many" breaks, with an additional 4 percent indicating "other problems" with condom strength.

Discussing the sexual transmission of AIDS without mentioning homosexual behavior in general and anal sex in particular is like discussing syphilis without mentioning intercourse. But this is precisely what the media and other responsible authorities do. Most articles and wire-service stories on AIDS do not so much as mention the words anal sex, much less indicate that it is the overwhelming risk factor. Similarly, one AIDS book designed for use by elementary-school students refers to heterosexual sex while making no reference to homosexuality, and one sex-education text formerly distributed in Seattle took the final step by stating that "AIDS is not a sexually transmitted disease."

The prevalence of AIDS among homosexuals is traceable to other considerations as well. Chief among these is the degree of promiscuity characteristic of many homosexuals. Lately, thanks to AIDS, the word "promiscuity" has begun to acquire an unfavorable connotation among homosexuals, but not so long ago it was carried as a badge of honor, if not a defining condition of homosexuality itself. It is certainly a defining characteristic of AIDS sufferers. Thus, a 1981 CDC study of homosexual AIDS victims whose median age was thirty-five found that they had had an average of 61 sexual partners a year. On the assumption that sexual relations begin at age seventeen, this means that the average lifetime number of partners (up to age thirty-five) would have amounted to 1,098. If each partner was equally promiscuous, the size of the pool of partners and partners-once-removed comes to a staggering 1,205,604.

In February 1987 the *Atlantic* carried a lengthy feature article ominously titled "Heterosexuals and AIDS: The Second Stage of the Epidemic." The most terrifying line in this terrifying essay ran, ". . . given the alarming accounts of hepatitis B and HIV contracted after a single encounter, it may well be that hepatitis and HIV are more readily transmissible than either gonorrhea or syphilis."

Were this comparison valid, AIDS would now be surging through the heterosexual population, since the transmission rate of gonorrhea and syphilis is believed to be from 20 to 50 percent, depending on the disease and whether it is passing from male to female or vice versa. But the statement is absurd. Aside from the obvious mistake of lumping together hepatitis B and HIV, there are no "alarming accounts [of infection] contracted after a single encounter"; quite to the contrary, so far there seems to be only one reported case in the United States of a person contracting HIV after a single exposure. To compare this with syphilis and gonorrhea is like saying that because an occasional gambler wins on the first spin of the roulette wheel, the chances of winning at roulette are better than 20 to 50 percent.

Indeed, the falsity of the comparison is revealed in the opening section of the *Atlantic* article itself. There the author cites a study, overseen by CDC epidemiologist Thomas Peterman, of 70 couples who continued to have unprotected sex even though one member was known to be carrying HIV. Despite repeated acts of vaginal intercourse, as often as several times daily and over a period of years, only eight of the 50 infected men transmitted the virus to their wives; of the 20 infected wives, only one passed it on to her husband. A 13-percent infection rate over a period of years hardly suggests a single-exposure transmission rate of higher than 20 to 50 percent.

With this and similar studies in mind, Drs. Curran and Peterman estimated that the "likeli-

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hood of [heterosexual] transmission to a partner with a single exposure must be quite low, probably less than 1 percent per contact." This estimate, which appeared in October 1986 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, was reprinted by the Public Health Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for distribution to the press. The *Atlantic* made no mention of the article, and with the exception of one story in the New York *Times*, it was ignored by the media at large.

The figure of less than 1 percent per contact was later reduced almost by a factor of ten in a study conducted by Nancy Padian of the Berkeley School of Public Health. Dr. Padian's study of 96 women who had sexual contact with HIV-infected men found that a woman's chance of infection was approximately one in one thousand. Although the corresponding odds for men could not be determined since there were too few male heterosexual infections to calculate, all such partner studies have shown that transmission from a woman to a man is even more difficult than from a man to a woman. The virus has indeed been found in vaginal secretions, but at levels considerably lower than in semen and blood, both of which contain large numbers of white blood cells, the usual abode of the AIDS virus. Researchers have come to a consensus that the amount of virus in tears is not enough to cause transmission, and the same may well be true of vaginal fluid.

In fact, the risk to the male, or penetrating, partner of acquiring AIDS in vaginal intercourse is so small that this alone could be enough to prevent any substantial heterosexual spread of the disease. Women, in other words, act as a "firebreak" against the spread of the virus.

How, then, is AIDS transmitted among heterosexuals? Some studies have shown that there too anal sex can be the culprit. (In the August 14, 1987 *JAMA*, Dr. Padian reported that female partners of infected persons who engaged in anal as well as vaginal and oral sex were 2.3 times more likely to acquire the infection than those who did not.) HIV infection may also be transmissible through oral sex, entering the blood system through bleeding gums or sores in the mouth—though several studies of homosexuals have found *no* HIV positives which could conclusively be traced to oral sex, and some researchers are unwilling to state that oral sex is a risk factor, even a small one.

More researchers are becoming convinced of the importance of STDs as co-factors in the spread of AIDS. Not only do these diseases raise the levels of white blood cells in the genital secretions of both sexes, they also cause ulcerations which allow the virus direct access to the bloodstream. While most spouse studies to date have not measured for this co-factor, one that did so found a very high correlation between HIV infection and previous infection with syphilis or gonorrhea; spouses who did not test HIV-positive had no such history. A study presented at the Third International AIDS Conference this past June indicated that persons with genital herpes run three to four times the risk of acquiring HIV infection. Those suffering from syphilis, which also causes lesions, appear to have four to five times the risk.

These, then, are the sexual practices that facilitate the spread of AIDS: high incidence of anal sex, high rates of promiscuity, and high level of STDs. It is clear from the list why the disease has spread like wildfire in the homosexual population, and why, *pace* the Surgeon General, it will not "explode" into the heterosexual population.

BUT (cry the doomsayers) what about Africa, where the heterosexual transmission rate is alleged to run at 90 percent, in a supposedly clear portent of things to come in the United States? (See the cover of the November 24, 1986 *Newsweek*: "AIDS in Africa: The Future Is Now.")

There are two serious problems with this theory. First, it assumes that the African epidemic is more mature than ours. In fact, however, while there is evidence of some HIV-related virus in Africa as early as 1959, there is no evidence that AIDS cases began showing up there much earlier than in the United States; the epidemic was first recognized on both continents in 1981.

Second, it assumes that Africa has gone through an epidemiological pattern similar to ours. But the evidence indicates otherwise. In the United States, AIDS has *always* been concentrated among homosexuals, IV drug users, receivers of blood products, and the sexual partners of members of these groups. As an article in the March 13, 1987 *JAMA* was able to report: "Indeed, since the arrival of HIV in the United States, the transmission patterns have remained remarkably consistent." They also remain remarkably consistent in Africa, where AIDS appears to have been concentrated from the first among the same groups it currently afflicts. Even in areas of Africa, such as Ghana, where the epidemic began only recently, the pattern of spread is similar to that in areas where it has raged for years.

What *is* going on in Africa? To begin with, the 90-percent figure for heterosexual transmission which the U.S. Public Health Service has supplied is but another myth, as the number of African children with AIDS is alone probably enough to show (up to 22 percent in South Africa, according to an article in the British medical journal *Lancet*). In addition, a host of factors exist in Africa which do not exist here but which greatly facilitate the spread of HIV in nonsexual ways.

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For example, because the cost of screening one blood donation in some poor African nations is approximately three times the *entire* per-capita expenditure for medical expenses, the procedure is virtually never performed and the national blood supply remains thoroughly contaminated. In some areas, the prevalence of HIV in the blood supply is estimated to be 8 to 10 percent; since the average transfusion requires several pints of blood, a person receiving a transfusion is practically guaranteed infection. Estimates of African AIDS cases attributed to transfusions range anywhere from 4 to 25 percent, depending on the area.

Unsterilized needles used by untrained medical workers also greatly facilitate the spread of the virus. These needles draw blood for transfusions, for vaccinations, and for administering therapeutic drugs such as penicillin, and they may be used hundreds of times without cleaning. A *JAMA* report (June 20, 1986) notes that 80 percent of the AIDS patients in Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire, told of receiving medical injections before the onset of the syndrome; 29 percent had gone to traditional practitioners, who also provide injections; and 9 percent had received a blood transfusion in the three-year period before the onset of the illness. Other studies have come up with similar findings in other parts of Africa suffering from an AIDS epidemic.

Native practices, such as ritual scarification of men and declitorization of women, must also be taken into account. If a group is so scarred, it is much more likely that anyone who carries the virus will pass it on.

Finally, there is some evidence that while pure homosexuality is rare in Africa, bisexuality is not. As Dr. Padian wrote in a letter to *JAMA*: "In the extreme case, if few males are exclusively homosexual in Africa and if most homosexual behavior is among bisexual males, then bisexual males could be largely responsible for the sexual transmission of AIDS." Because, however, bisexuality is so taboo in Africa that African AIDS victims will seldom admit to it, Dr. Padian's theory may remain just that.

All these different modes of HIV transmission make a mockery of the 90-percent figure for heterosexual transmission. Of course, they do not dispose of the fact that the African rates still remain very much higher than in the United States, but there are reasons for that. In order to avoid AIDS in the United States, heterosexuals must merely avoid IV drug abusers and bisexuals —a very small percentage of the population. In Africa, by contrast, there is (as we have seen) a vast number of conduits into the heterosexual population, and hence a vast number of infected heterosexuals. The final pieces of the puzzle are extreme promiscuity and venereal disease. According to a report in the February 13, 1986 *New England Journal of Medicine* (*NEJM*), prostitutes in Nairobi, Kenya, average over 900 partners a year (at 50 cents apiece); since the per-capita expenditure on medical treatment in central Africa is all of approximately two dollars a year, one can posit a tremendously high level of untreated STDs in the sexually active population. As noted above, a strong correlation has been shown among STDs, genital sores, and the transmission of the AIDS virus, and the *NEJM* article found just such a correlation.

The African AIDS epidemic is devastating. But it is uniquely African. We can no more deduce transmission patterns in the United States from Africa than we can assume that because Africans suffer periodic famine, we will too.

ONE key indicator that would tell us whether AIDS could become epidemic among heterosexuals has been ignored both by the media and, until very recently, public-health authorities: tertiary transmission.

Primary transmission is to a member of a high-risk group—homosexual, bisexual, IV drug user, hemophiliac. Secondary transmission occurs when the primary recipient passes the virus on heterosexually to a member of a non-high-risk group; most secondary recipients are steady female partners of IV drug users. Tertiary transmission occurs when the secondary recipient then passes on the virus to another heterosexual. Were tertiary transmissions to occur in significant numbers, they would portend an epidemic for heterosexuals, since tertiaries would beget fourth-generation recipients, and so on.

Sometimes, indeed, the media simply assume the existence of such tertiary transmissions; as one Washington *Post* columnist wrote matter-of-factly, "Prostitutes are spreading it to their customers, who then spread it to their spouses or girlfriends." The most controversial aspect of Surgeon General Koop's AIDS program, AIDS education for elementary schoolchildren, similarly assumes that tertiary transmission is a clear and present danger. Yet little children do not themselves shoot drugs, or sleep with IV drug users, or with those who do sleep with them. Asked how many cases of heterosexually transmitted AIDS have occurred among elementary-school students, a Koop spokesman replied, "None that I know of."

Isolated incidents aside, tertiary transmission simply is not happening. AIDS began showing up among homosexuals in the United States in 1979; early in 1981, the CDC documented AIDS cases among IV drug users, and by June of that year in their heterosexual partners. At that rate tertiary heterosexual AIDS should have begun showing up as early as late 1981. By 1982, the first fourth-generation cases would have become manifest. Long before now, AIDS should have been cutting a swath through the nation's heterosexual population. It is not doing so, and the

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reason is the lack of tertiary heterosexual transmission.

The CDC keeps no figures on this, so I contacted the four cities with the highest numbers of AIDS cases directly. In three of them the numbers of heterosexually transmitted cases were altogether so small—18 out of 3,661 cases in San Francisco, 30 out of 3,459 in Los Angeles, 12 out of 1,344 in Houston—as to leave little room for tertiary transmissions. New York City, with one-third of all reported AIDS cases, has the dubious distinction of being the nation's AIDS capital; its epidemic is also thought to be slightly more mature than that in San Francisco or Los Angeles; and its tracking and identification of cases are probably the best in the world. Of 11,217 AIDS victims, New York reports that "zero" have been second-generation heterosexual.

YET despite everything we know about the true pattern of AIDS in the United States, the effort to "democratize" this plague (in George Will's phrase) nevertheless continues unabated. Mathilde Krim, founder of the AIDS Medical Foundation and one of the leading propagators of the idea of a heterosexual AIDS epidemic, says, "I think it's a fluke that AIDS emerged in the gay community." "Viruses," she asserts, "do not discriminate on the basis of sexual preference." In Britain, similarly, billboards proclaim, "AIDS Doesn't Discriminate," and American public-health officials and homosexual-rights advocates have likewise asserted, "We're all in this together."

The slogans have a satisfying ring to them, but quickly fall apart under scrutiny. True, viruses do not discriminate. Neither do bullets and knives, but you are far more likely to catch one walking through a dark South Bronx alley than strolling down a well-lit street on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Most of those infected have indeed exercised a discriminatory preference which (a) brings them into contact with already infected persons and (b) involves them in acts that allow the virus to be transmitted. To be sure, the purpose of these acts is not to transmit the virus, any more than the purpose of walking through a dark alley is to be attacked. But one chooses whether or not to walk through the alley.

Homosexual-rights groups are of course painfully aware of the appeal exercised by the notion that AIDS is nature's or God's retribution on them, and this is one reason they have sought to tie AIDS to heterosexual sex. Thus, one San Francisco health official I spoke to, while admitting that AIDS is not now a substantial threat to heterosexuals in that city and will not become one in the foreseeable future, defended the practice of suggesting that heterosexuals were at risk because it made them "socially conscious" of the problems of homosexuals.

Another reason has to do with research money. Randy Shilts, the nation's first full-time AIDS journalist (for the San Francisco *Chronicle*) and author of *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*, has observed that "A lot of gay people in AIDS organizations have spent years watching friends and lovers die" and are convinced that research money has been slow in coming because AIDS is not perceived as a general threat. Hence the "concerted effort" to create heterosexual panic that is being made by "gays, public-health officials, and scientists who want research dollars."

If homosexual activists and their sympathizers deploy the myth of heterosexual AIDS in order to destigmatize homosexuals, on the opposite side of the spectrum Christian fundamentalists deploy it in order to underline their vision of morality. Reverend Jerry Falwell, for example, has called for "immediate action [or] AIDS will prove to be the final epidemic—with millions dying each year—including your loved ones." Others continue to cite alleged evidence that HIV can be casually transmitted, while in the same breath accusing homosexuals of bringing this plague down upon the rest of us. (A moment's reflection would show that if the contagion were casually transmitted it would no more be a "homosexual" virus than is a cold or the flu.)

Conservative moralists in general have also seized upon the AIDS epidemic to promote a return to morality, urging chastity or monogamy as a means of avoiding the disease. Obviously, chastity reduces one's chance of receiving AIDS sexually to zero, barring rape. But with monogamy things are not so simple. Indeed, the chance of exposure inside a steady relationship where one partner is already infected is considerably greater than outside. Practically all heterosexually transmitted AIDS cases are found in steadily monogamous or virtually monogamous relationships with IV drug users or, much less commonly, with bisexuals, since only such a relationship can expose one frequently to infection. By contrast, the risk of getting AIDS from a single heterosexual encounter, so long as neither partner is a bisexual man nor a drug abuser, has been calculated (by Jeffrey E. Harris of MIT) at less than one in a million. "Whether it's one in a million, or one in a hundred thousand, or one in ten thousand, or one in ten million, I don't know," adds the CDC's Meade Morgan. "But the risk is very low in any given instance."

Conservative moralists are fond of concentrating their attention not just on heterosexuals but specifically on the sexual habits of the white middle class, and in this they are at one with the liberal media, with public officials, and with the condom industry.

"I'd do a lot for love," says the attractive white middle-class woman in public-service announcements on TV and in magazines, "but I'm not ready to die for it." AIDS stories on the covers

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of major newsmagazines invariably picture middle-class whites; the *Atlantic* article carried illustrations of seven individuals, all white and all dressed in yuppie garb; and AIDS victims in television dramas, in addition to being disproportionately heterosexual, are always white. Similarly, when ABC's *Nightline* ran a four-hour program on AIDS, the segment on sexual transmission opened with a clip depicting nothing but white, middle-class heterosexuals discussing their fears; and a half-hour video on AIDS features Ron Reagan, the President's son, with a beautiful blonde.

One would never know from all this that the profile of the typical victim of heterosexually transmitted AIDS is a lower-class black woman who is the regular sex partner of an IV drug user. White heterosexuals make up approximately one-half of 1 percent of all AIDS cases; as of September 14, 1987, of 41,250 cases reported, only 254 whites were listed as being heterosexually infected.

This is not to say that it is absolutely impossible for members of the white middle class to contract AIDS heterosexually. But it happens so rarely that one hears about it immediately and often. A family in which a hemophiliac gave the virus to his wife, who then transferred it to her child during pregnancy, has now been featured in no fewer than four national magazines and on *60 Minutes*.

In another case, a national magazine told the story of a white middle-class married couple from the Houston area; the husband had reportedly acquired AIDS through sexual contact in one incident of intercourse with a woman before he married. On the cover ran the line, "AIDS, What Every Wife Must Know."

I asked about this particular case at the Houston Health Department, which is required to document all area AIDS cases. I was told there was no report of such a man. Of the total of two males listed under the heterosexual-contacts category, one was a Haitian, and the other did match the victim in the article except that his relationship with the HIV carrier was not a single incident but "ongoing."

THE plague that has visited our country over the last few years is an extremely serious one, and people are dying from it in horrible ways. They deserve compassion, and every measure of scientific ingenuity and medical succor we can extend. Their rights need to be protected, and their suffering understood. But we also have a duty to be truthful about the pattern and the limits of this disease, not least in order properly to direct our resources to those afflicted with it or in danger of becoming afflicted. Every dollar spent, every commercial made, every health warning released, that does not specify promiscuous anal intercourse and needle-sharing as the overwhelming risk factors in the transmission of AIDS is a lie, a waste of funds and energy, and a cruel diversion.

Randy Shilts, who has rationalized the spread of the heterosexual-AIDS myth, is also frank to concede the irresponsibility of this approach: "In two or three years heterosexuals are going to wake up and see that they're not getting the disease. Then what?" Then what, indeed?

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The New York (Jewish) Intellectuals

Ruth R. Wisse

By now, most educated Americans know something of the New York intellectuals and their achievement. When William Phillips and Philip Rahv (born William Litvinsky and Ivan Greenbaum) revived the defunct *Partisan Review* (born Communist) in December 1937 as an independent Marxist periodical, they attracted a distinguished circle of contributors who turned the magazine into an exciting intellectual forum. Sidney Hook, Lionel Trilling, Diana Trilling, F.W. Dupee, Mary McCarthy, Meyer Schapiro, Harold Rosenberg, Dwight Macdonald, Clement Greenberg, Lionel Abel, and James T. Farrell were among its original featured writers. Younger by some ten to fifteen years, Saul Bellow, Isaac Rosenfeld, William Barrett, Irving Howe, Elizabeth Hardwick, Delmore Schwartz, Alfred Kazin, Leslie Fiedler, Richard Chase, and Robert Warshow broke into its pages soon after. A "third generation" included Hilton Kramer, Steven Marcus, Susan Sontag, and Norman Podhoretz, the last named of whom was later to characterize the movement as a "Family" of founding fathers and competitive offspring. Unlike the Bloomsbury social set in England that finally narrowed around Virginia Woolf, or the court that Jean-Paul Sartre gathered in Paris around *Les Temps Modernes*, this large, fluid American circle had no dominant personality or even, finally, one single magazine at its center, but kept expanding outward, regenerating itself time and again through newer journals like Commentary (which was founded in 1945 and featured such writers as Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, Daniel Bell, and Paul Goodman) and, much later, in the 60's, the *New York Review of Books* (whose American contributors were mainly drawn from the *Partisan Review* and Commentary stables). It became perhaps the largest community of intellectuals in modern times.

This community of the New York intellectuals, most of whom were the children of Jewish immigrant families, changed for all time the atmosphere of American letters. Coming of age between the 1920's and 1940's, they still, as individuals, faced active discrimination in the formal institutions of American higher learning and in the attitudes of the intellectual elite. If, in the 1890's, William Dean Howells had shown a rare hospitality to immigrants when he promoted the translation of Morris Rosenfeld's Yiddish poetry into English and later encouraged the English fiction of Abraham Cahan, much more typical of American men of letters was the fear, expressed most memorably by Henry James, that Anglo-American culture would be fatally contaminated by the incursion of "foreign" elements.

Up until the 1930's Jewish intellectual life in New York had flourished in Yiddish, in a half-dozen daily newspapers, tens of journals and miscellanies, a network of theaters and cafés. Three generations of American Yiddish writers and poets had turned New York into a world center of Jewish creativity. But the same intellectual pressure that had fueled this rise of Yiddish culture in the immigrant community also determined the children's rapid accommodation to English. Parents who wished the best for their children encouraged their passage from home. The public schools, however insensitive some may have been to the feelings of the Yiddish-speaking child, quickly taught him English and thereby held out to him possibilities of advancement and education that he could never duplicate in his immigrant world.

It was to be expected that the young immigrant intellectuals, suspended at first between a home to which they no longer belonged and a society in which they did not yet feel themselves at home, should have expressed a sense of estrangement and alienation. Characterizing the "Family" as a whole in the period that he came to know it, Norman Podhoretz wrote in *Making It* (1967) that "They did not feel they belonged to America or that America belonged to them." Consider, however, the Americanness of this emotion. One can hardly imagine Franz Kafka, Max Brod, Hugo Bergmann, or any other member of that precocious circle of Jewish intellectuals in Prague earlier in the century complaining that he did

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not feel he "belonged" to Czechoslovakia, or Czechoslovakia to him. The force of Podhoretz's observation derives from the very American expectation that these intellectuals *should* have felt at home in their country, that some anticipated attachment was missing. And in fact by the time *Making It* appeared, the mutual attachment had formed. The New York intellectuals were the first "immigrant" group to be fully absorbed into American literary culture, enlarging the idea of America as it encompassed them.

Although its most famous figure is a novelist, Saul Bellow, not even his fiction, rooted as it is in ideas, challenges the dominant image of the group as a community of *thinkers*. Delmore Schwartz aspired most of all to be a great poet and also came to be well-known for his short stories, yet the philosopher William Barrett has reminded us that Schwartz too was trained in philosophy and "retained from his immersion in it an amazing intuition about ideas." Thus while the phrase New York intellectuals may require some geographic qualification, since some prominent members (including Bellow) hailed from the Midwestern metropolis of Chicago, the choice of the term intellectuals is entirely accurate. These were not, primarily, academic scholars, applying disciplined method to the investigation of a given body of material; nor, though many at least at first were Marxists, were they *orthodox* Marxists, answerable to historically determined laws. They were a literate street gang, using whatever tactics they had at hand in defense of their shifting territory. Ideas were animate—at least as real as the people who held them, to judge from the emphasis in most of their memoirs on intellectual debate rather than on the usual kinds of personal gossip. Ideas were their sport, profession, passion. A tribute to their achievement could well be entitled *The Opening of the American Mind*.

It therefore comes as something of a shock to discover that a major tendency of the books that have lately appeared about the New York intellectuals is to downplay their ideas in favor of other factors. The New York intellectuals believed that their ideas could affect the course of human events. The academics who now write about them with varying degrees of detachment treat them as a curious sociological episode, or as failed revolutionaries, or at any rate as something other than the cultural and political vanguard they set out to be. To be sure, the authors of these books are scholars, and an inevitable prissiness sets in when academics go about analyzing living subjects. In the case of such brilliant subjects, there is also a predictable falling-off in intellectual quality and style. But I am referring to something more insidious—a revisionism that exploits the opportunity afforded by scholarship to reduce its subject, to render it harmless, or to falsify its nature.

II

AT FIRST SIGHT, Thomas Bender's *New York Intellect** does not appear to suffer from any such agenda. A finely written and well-researched history of intellectual life in New York City from 1750 to the beginnings of our own time, it shows how the intellectual concerns and ambitions of small groups of New Yorkers shaped the city's institutions and were modified by its constant growth. Bender describes himself as an engaged New Yorker, and his ideal of an urban intellectual is one whose commitment to excellence in both principle and practice similarly enlarges the metropolitan culture of which he is a part.

As it approaches our own time, however, the book loses its balance almost to the point of eccentricity. In his eagerness to provide a corrective to what he considers (perhaps with some justification) an exaggerated emphasis on the New York intellectuals as the center of the city's cultural life, Bender suggests that the best of their ideas were already anticipated by other American critics, that their politics and poetics were only an elaboration of continental models, and that their attentiveness to the "word" rather than to the eye and the ear severely handicapped their own creative development and the ascendancy of New York as an international metropolis. Whatever claim New York has had since the 1930's to be a world cultural capital rests, according to Bender, not on its literary culture but on its achievement in the fine and performing arts, and in particular on the work of the New York City Ballet, "the best ballet company in the world."

Yet this critique of the *Partisan Review* circle as "a consumer of European political ideology" and a "provincial importer of European modernism" is not only off the mark historically, it also misses the New York intellectuals' peculiar qualities of engagement, qualities of the kind Bender professes to admire in others. In arguing the fine points of Marxism, the New York intellectuals, most of whom had fed on ideological argument along with their mother's milk, were hardly acting as consumers of alien goods. In general, from the 1880's onward, socialist and Marxist ideas could no more have been kept out of America than out of Russia, a country to which they were at least equally alien. By establishing and continuing to control the intellectual terms of the debate over Marxism in America, the New York circle made its most enduring contribution to the nation and the world, a contribution more controversial but at least as influential as that of the New York City Ballet.

Something similar can be said, moreover, about the relation of the New York intellectuals to cultural modernism—and indeed, even in Bender's

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own terms, the contribution to art appreciation and criticism of Meyer Schapiro, Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, Lionel Abel, William Barrett, and Hilton Kramer should have won them at least honorable mention in his recounting.

One neuters a cat when one no longer wishes it to mate or to scrap. *Progidal Sons*,* Alexander Bloom's thick study of the New York intellectuals and their world, is in no small way dedicated to that end. It is not merely that Bloom concludes his book with the observation that "the New York intellectuals have gone—passed on to new attachments or passed away all together [*sic*]," but that throughout he describes their ideas and the conflicts in which they engaged in such a manner as to rob them of their authenticity.

The pedestrian quality of Bloom's thinking and his poor ability to express it may have something to do with the deadening results of his effort. Admittedly *Prodigal Sons* undertakes a difficult task —the coherent analysis of a group characterized by one of its sharpest wits as a "herd of independent minds." Yet Bloom's introduction of this phrase also shows how little he is up to handling the writer who formulated it and those it was meant to describe:

> Harold Rosenberg once labeled his fellow intellectuals as a "herd of independent minds." He went on to describe his personal distinctions from the "herd." The others could have equally well set themselves apart from the rest. All of them, however, including Rosenberg, belonged for a long time. They resisted inclusion because they worked so hard to make themselves something and, in so doing, often lost sight of the common ties. And they were not always friendly in person or courteous in print with one another. Still, they all ran with the herd.

Thus does a man set out to carve a diamond with hammer and chisel.

Drawing heavily from the memoirs of group members, Bloom offers a composite picture of their childhoods in Brooklyn and the Bronx, their initiation into radical politics, the social dynamic that brought them together. He summarizes the evolution of their political ideas from revolutionary Marxism to liberal anti-Communism. His narrative, which extends into the mid-1970's, also traces divisions within the group, from Dwight Macdonald's break with *Partisan Review* (he opposed America's entry into World War II) to the widening gulf today between unreconstructed socialists and neoconservatives. In all this the book provides a kind of standard Left version of the complete story, in which the author affects not to show a preference, at least overtly, for some over others. The glaring exception is Bloom's treatment of Sidney Hook, who emerges (and not from this book alone) as a favorite antagonist.

The turning point in *Prodigal Sons* occurs with the 1952 *Partisan Review* symposium, "Our Country and Our Culture," which confirmed a somewhat changed attitude to America and its institutions on the part of many of the New York intellectuals. Through a process of intellectual ferment that had begun with the Moscow Trials of 1936 and continued through the postwar years, most of the contributors to this symposium, with varying degrees of regret or guilt for the positions they had once espoused, acknowledged that the ongoing Communist threat to their society required of them a new kind of engagement in the life of ideas. Bloom qualifies the nature of that engagement as follows:

> They wanted to function as intellectuals and still contribute in a regular and intimate way to the workings of the society. They wanted to be not commissars but consultants, not the spearhead of a vanguard party leading the society toward a new utopia but a ready resource to which contemporary society turned for periodic guidance. No longer enrolling in the causes of others, they created their own movement. Although this movement aimed to improve the society in which they lived, it would also substantially improve the standing of the intellectuals who signed on.

The last sentence is characteristic of Bloom's approach in the ensuing 200 pages. He implies (because innuendo does not have to be substantiated) that after World War II the real commitment of the New York intellectuals was to their own advancement. The fight in the 1950's against Communist influence in American society, the recoil from the anti-intellectualism of the Beats, the resistance (at least by some) to the anarchism of the 1960's—this was all part of the group's consolidation of power. Their ideas were merely the convenient means to an end.

Bloom's reductionism has a second, more serious, feature. By taking the history out of intellectual history, he makes it appear that the men and women in his story were not independent thinkers but just exaggeratedly opinionated people who were stuck with their ideas the way a salesman is stuck with a line of merchandise. In his text there is no Soviet conquest of Eastern Europe in the wake of World War II, no revelations of a successful Soviet espionage network in North America, no invasion of South Korea by the Communist North, no Berlin Wall—though there are occasional allusions to such events by his subjects. The only reality the author credits is the "hysteria of postwar anti-Communism." When it comes to evidence of Communist influence *in* America, Bloom simply feigns agnosticism by citing the ongoing argument between the "staunch defenders" of the Rosenbergs and

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Alger Hiss and those who have "consistently thought them guilty."

In this way Bloom's study really becomes the vendetta of a leftist academic against a generation some of whose members came to take democratic politics so seriously that they would even consider the merits of going to war to preserve the country's freedoms, or of going to court to preserve academic integrity. It is in this latter connection especially that Bloom tries to score against Sidney Hook.

Describing Hook's reaction to the disruptive tactics of the New Left on campuses in the late 1960's, Bloom mocks this defender of an open university—" 'What is of first importance is to preserve, of course, the *absolute* intellectual integrity of our classrooms' "—with the reminder that fifteen years earlier Hook had been willing "to drive individuals out of academe. . . ." He is referring to an old argument between Hook and those (like Henry Steele Commager) who had maintained in the 1950's that a Communist should not be fired from the university because of his political beliefs. Hook, taking the contrary view, had asked whether to deny a fervent apostle of euthanasia the directorship of a home for the aged and infirm was necessarily to deny him his rights. Bloom either pretends not to see or, worse, really does not see that in each case Hook was upholding precisely the same position.

But then Bloom, too, remains consistent in his fashion. Just as he does not know whether there was ever a Communist threat in the 1950's, so too "there is considerable debate as to whether the student movement limited or expanded openness on America's campuses" in the 1960's.

YET as a Yiddish expression has it, there is nothing so bad that it cannot get worse. The patina of scholarly civility that Bloom somehow manages to maintain is altogether absent from Alan Wald's *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left From the 1930's to the 1980's.** Indeed, what one concludes from this book is that the battle Sidney Hook waged in the 1950's against the entry of Communists into the classroom has been decisively lost. For Wald, a professor of English literature and American culture at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, is also a bona-fide Trotskyist, and one of his stated purposes in this work of supposedly disinterested scholarship is to "help allay the process of deradicalization that eventually overtakes almost all whose lives are based in institutions of teaching, scholarship, and publishing during conservative periods."

In other words, the real subject of this book is not the New York intellectuals at all but the Communism of Leon Trotsky as a still-viable political system. The New York intellectuals are useful to this end insofar as some of them were admirers of Trotsky in the 1930's, and therefore a carefully pointed commentary on their activities and their ideas might serve to revive Trotsky's reputation. Unfortunately, this approach has its pitfalls: first, all the former radicals repudiated their Communism, and second, the group was originally united by many other complicating intellectual strands apart from Trotskyism.

Wald handles the second of these problems simply by asserting the centrality of Trotskyite influence: "Despite their small size, such groups [as the Trotskyites] were often the aquifer of currents of political thought among the intellectuals. . . ." As for the first problem, Wald turns it to his advantage by turning it inside-out: the fact that some New York intellectuals became disenchanted with Trotskyism or were never Trotskyites in the first place reflects not on Trotskyism but on them, and particularly on their instinct for treachery and falsification.

Still, before they betrayed the faith, these intellectuals did try to distinguish usefully between Trotsky's "good" and Stalin's "bad" Communism, to marshal evidence in Trotsky's defense, and to develop powerful arguments against the capitalism of the West. Wald treats most tenderly those former radicals like the art historian Meyer Schapiro who "continued his allegiance to revolutionary Marxism throughout the 1940's and into the early 1950's, when he quietly shifted to left-wing social democracy." Much harsher treatment is accorded once-powerful Marxists like Max Eastman (not a member of the *Partisan Review* circle) whose anti-Communism "soon mushroomed into virtual paranoia" and (again) Sidney Hook, whose defense of U.S. policy in World War II is represented as a "repudiation of the very values by which he had lived his own life since World War I." As the genuine Marxists grow rarer and rarer among the New York intellectuals, Wald tries to salvage what residual Trotskyite sympathies he can from socialists like Irving Howe and the "cul-de-sac of social democracy." Finally, abandoning all semblance of scholarship, he rants against "The Great Retreat" of leading neoconservative intellectuals "who had long sought ideological acceptance by government."

Despite the great mass of evidence that Wald accumulates in his prosecution of the former radicals, this book ultimately shows itself as lacking in any kind of integrity. For today's reader it is still a bracing experience to go back to some of the old issues of the *New Leader*, *Partisan Review*, and the *Contemporary Jewish Record* (the precursor of COMMENTARY), because the quality of intellectual engagement often remains impressive even when the ideas themselves are weak or false. The best fights in politics as in sport are between equals, when antagonists respect one another's work enough to read it. Wald

* University of North Carolina Press, 440 pp., $32.50.

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demonstrates no such struggle with his ideological enemies among the neoconservatives, trusting instead that a few accusations of currying favor with Washington, or of alignment with the haves against the have-nots, are enough to clinch and hold the moral high ground. But this sort of thing may be all that is needed these days to win tenure.

CONTRASTING sharply with Alan Wald's yearning for the Old Left is Mark Shechner's defense of the artist's inner life in *After the Revolution: Studies in the Contemporary Jewish-American Imagination.** All the more remarkable, then, that academic contemporaries of such different temperament and orientation should arrive at such similar conclusions.

Shechner proposes that the creative period of the New York intellectuals was not the earlier stage of their radicalism (*à la* Wald), but the period of "crisis and conversion" that followed in the 1940's and 1950's. The turning point in the lives of these moderns who had grown up in the revolutionary movements was not toward a political faith but away from one. But how does a creative person, reared on alienation, adjust to the change?

> How did you go on smashing idols after you'd put down the Marxist club? It was in the effort to solve that dilemma that a remarkable history of conversions took place, conversions that shaped the careers of a generation of writers and left a profound mark on our literature and our thought.

In Shechner's telling, the conversions were to a "politics of self-renewal," first through an immersion in the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Reich, then through an attempt to realize the "self" so revealed. In particular, Reich's "sex-pol doctrine," according to which the gratification of frequent orgasm releases not only individual energy but the democratic and libertarian spirit in general, Shechner considers to have been a major force in the liberation of a creative "Jewish" potential. Unfortunately he does not set out to test this notion by seeing whether or not it applies to American Jewish writers, or by examining whether their Jewishness had anything to do with the alleged process; instead, he selects those—Lionel Trilling, Isaac Rosenfeld, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Allen Ginsberg, and Philip Roth—who will take the argument where he wants it to go.

As for the transition itself from Marx to Freud, Shechner, unlike presumably Wald, seems to regard it as at least in part a defensible thing: if it can be charged against some writers that "their regrouping of energies around the embattled self signaled a retreat from political struggle in favor of purely private gestures of revolt, it needs also to be added that it expressed the seriousness of their inquiries into the terms of human politics and the eradication of social evils by purely social measures." But this is as far as Shechner is prepared to go. Political certainties having crumbled, the new intellectual hero was one who struggled with self-doubt—yet only if the struggle led straight back to a politics of liberation, now to be achieved not through class warfare but through inner release. Thus Shechner distinguishes between the Lionel Trilling who made keen use as a literary critic of psychoanalytic theory to unmask the facile optimism of the "liberal imagination" and the Trilling whose misguided emphasis on maturity and judiciousness resulted in a politics of containment and a conservative impulse toward culture.

For Shechner, the climax of the movement of the intellectual psyche toward self-liberation and liberated politics is Norman Mailer's 1957 essay, "The White Negro," a prooftext of the unmediated id:

> [W]ith his hair-trigger sexuality and ready violence he had something about him of the alienated intellectual returned from the tents of exile as a warrior. Sired by Hegel out of the streets of New York, he was as much the anti-worker as he was the anti-bourgeois, the anti-Jew, anti-intellectual, and anti-liberal. He was the new Adam, the wrath and scourge of the libido come to cleanse the earth of the accumulated grime of repression, his body his only scripture, his penis his only sword.

Although the literary allusiveness of this manic passage hints at some ironic detachment from its subject, Shechner leaves no doubt of his own identification with Mailer's advertised *agon*. And indeed, as if to dramatize his theme of self-liberation, Shechner himself finally breaks through the scholarly mask and leaps naked into the text as a true child of the 60's, standing as if it were today at the Berkeley demonstration against the Vietnam war on November 20, 1965:

> Among the recollections I continue to treasure of those times this one stands out: that of Allen Ginsberg as the impresario of that moment when 100,000 people marched through the Bay Area guided by his spirit of play and his rules of peaceable conduct. At that moment, no one else in the Bay Area, maybe not in America, politician or priest, commanded the moral authority of this balding, bearded, libertine, homosexual, Jewish poet.

To be sure, Shechner does draw certain limits. He regrets Mailer's sponsorship of the murderer, Jack Henry Abbott, and in the end his revulsion at the sado-masochistic politics that Ginsberg endorsed leads him to reject the Reichian doctrine from which he believes it emerged. But not for

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a moment is he prepared to investigate the connection between the unfettered id and the violence it breeds, or between the "spirit of play" of the 60's and the evil to which it contributed.

The final chapter on Philip Roth predictably rehearses, as Roth himself has done so often, the abuse to which he has been subject at the hands of Jewish parents and critics; thus does Shechner keep alive the romance of the artist as archetypal sufferer and victim of the bourgeoisie, and thus, in his identification of a common enemy, does he implicitly draw a link between his own brand of cultural politics and the more obvious kinds of leftism preached by the likes of Alexander Bloom and Alan Wald.

THE most recent book on our subject is cast in the form of a dirge. In *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*,* Russell Jacoby proposes that the absence of any prominent younger intellectuals to challenge and usurp the place of their elders is proof of the disappearance of the intellectual as a viable type. Following his subtitle, Jacoby argues that the New Left, whose members he regards as the obvious heirs apparent of the American intellectual tradition, succumbed to the professionalism of university life and no longer address themselves effectively to public issues. In a sharp falling off from the bohemian élan and accessible style of their forebears, qualities that were themselves the outgrowth of a rich urban life that is no longer available, the new Marxist intellectuals "have campus offices and assigned parking spaces" and write only for one another.

Of the giants of the past, Jacoby is by no means impressed with the New York intellectuals, or rather with the Jews among them, who may have only "visited radicalism while more non-Jewish intellectuals stayed the winter." Matching Lionel Trilling against Dwight Macdonald, Daniel Bell against C. Wright Mills, and Norman Podhoretz against Michael Harrington, he finds that the Jew's estrangement from Christian civilization, far from encouraging a hardy radicalism, made him overidentify with the dominant culture, overeager to win its blessing. Of this supposed sellout he asks, "Did the radicalism steeped in anxiety slide into conservatism, while the Texan, Puritan, or Scottish identities of [C. Wright] Mills or [Edmund] Wilson or [Gore] Vidal or [John Kenneth] Galbraith gave rise to a bony radicalism more resistant to economic and social blandishments?" For Jacoby, as for Wald and Bloom, an intellectual who reconsiders his position in anything but a leftward direction is by definition acting out his meaner ambitions or, in this case, his fatter anxieties.

The failures (as he sees them) of Trilling, Bell, Podhoretz, and especially and yet again Sidney Hook, Jacoby attributes to them alone (and their Jewishness); the failures of his still-Marxist colleagues, who after twenty years in the universities have yet to make a worthy intellectual showing, he attributes to "academe," which, by providing secure employment, has deprived the would-be intellectual of his independence and turned him into a professional, Jacoby's term for a scholar. "The world is slithering toward nuclear disaster, global pollution, and starvation, but one Marxist critic writing on another brightly trades in Marxist academic futures." But as with the neoconservatives, so with the Marxists, at no point in his lament does Jacoby address the content of their thought. Apparently it has not occurred to him that the incomprehensibility and internalism of contemporary Marxist writing may derive not from any unwillingness to go out into the public marketplace, but from having nothing to sell. His own self-indulgent book, which undertakes to chart the course of an intellectual community without subjecting to scrutiny a single one of the ideas over which it is divided, is itself an illustration of the failure he set out to describe but still does not understand. For he too is an academic, and the academy is a place where ideas can be taught without being tested.

III

AFTER all this, one is left wondering: why, if they are not interested in the ideas of the New York intellectuals, and they seem no less eager to attack than to defend them, are today's authors attracted to them in the first place?

The answer is to be sought, I think, in the central notion of the intellectual that was championed by the *Partisan Review* writers in the late 1930's and that still beckons to the generation of scholars that came of age in the 1960's. As formulated by the editors of the magazine in their opening statement, it was a notion of "unequivocal independence." And here, rather than in any of the false or side issues discussed by their academic chroniclers and critics, lies the true problem raised by the New York intellectuals.

Independence from what? In the context of the time, independence from the Communist party, to which the magazine had originally been attached, and also from Stalinist dogmas that exerted an authority beyond the political organization Stalin had set in place. While continuing to acknowledge the importance of Marxism as a political standard, and as one of the two criteria—the other was modernism—informing its opposition to bourgeois society, *Partisan Review* was henceforth to place its editorial accent "chiefly on culture and its broader social determinants."

The original editorial statement, reprinted

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last year without apology at the front of *Partisan Review*'s 50th anniversary issue, presented an embattled group of dissenters ranged against the totalitarian trend in the Communist movement that could "no longer be combatted from within." The justification for their rhetoric of heroic resistance derived from the simple fact that by the 1930's the Soviet Union had already established a worldwide apparatus to ensure an eventual global domination. But note: it was not to any *political* reality (such as a state) that the group mounted its active opposition, but rather to an ideology that had limited their freedom of expression and creativity. In real terms, *their* polity, the state in which *they* lived, allowed them to put out any magazine they liked, and even placed no restrictions on the development of modernism (except in the area of obscenity).

Thus, though it undoubtedly required courage to make a public disavowal of Stalinism in the intellectual climate of the time, the liberty the *Partisan Review* writers championed was a liberty they already enjoyed. To twist the famous phrase of Lionel Trilling, they stood at a *bloodless* crossroads of literature and politics, declaring their independence not only from a system to which they were not subject, but also and at the same time their disaffection from its political alternative, the system that granted them freedom.

Although *Partisan Review*'s declaration of independence did not mention Jews, for those of the New York intellectuals who were themselves Jewish (and they were the majority by far) it justified the same kind of disengagement from the idea (and, later, the reality) of a Jewish polity, and on the same "heroic" grounds. This might seem peculiar. As Jews, most of the New York intellectuals had been the targets of active discrimination, limiting their access to the best American universities and their prospects of employment. As Jews, too, they inherited the history of persecution that had brought their parents to America. The dramatic rise of anti-Semitism between the world wars should have sharpened their sense of injury and danger. To be a Jew was to be on the side of the persecuted.

But even less than opposition to Stalinism required (as it seemed to them) enlistment in the cause of democracy did opposition to anti-Semitism appear to require enlistment in the cause of the Jews. And as in the former case, so too in the latter, Marxism provided the most obvious grounds for keeping one's distance. Marxists in pursuit of a classless international order expected the Jews to lead the process of national self-dissolution because they lacked a country of their own. Unlike, say, the Italians, whose socialism was an expression of their patriotism, the Jews, having delayed their *risorgimento* from the 19th to the 20th century, were to eliminate the phase of national consolidation by dissolving their national identity. The end-product of this divestiture was to be the "non-Jewish Jew," the perfectly deracinated, perfectly cosmopolitan creature.

As for non-Marxist forms of cosmopolitanism (of the kind championed, for instance, by Thomas Bender's hero Randolph Bourne), these also restricted the engagement by Jews in Jewish matters. Cosmopolitan Jews might sponsor magazines for the preservation of Jewish writing, or scholarship for a deeper understanding of Jewish history and culture, but not committees to save imperiled Jewish communities overseas.

In short, Zionism and other forms of Jewish political mobilization were opposed by both the hard and the soft American Left, even when they did not require an outright rejection of Jewish particularism altogether. Nathan Glazer has recently observed that among those Jews who were involved in the creation and sustaining of *Partisan Review*, Marxist affiliation did not seem to demand the sort of denial of their Jewishness that was common in Europe. Because social or political acceptance in America did not depend on conversion to Christianity, American Jewish intellectuals did not feel compelled to renounce their Jewishness—or, what may be more to the point, to affirm it strongly. Some of them even thought they were universalizing the best of Judaism by freeing its ethical kernel from the husk of the Law, much as the early Christians had sought to do—though this was not an analogy they applied to themselves. But whatever the motive and circumstance, the fact remains that even today, when, as Glazer notes, everywhere except in the universities "Marxism and all its variants are in ruins, if one views them in serious intellectual terms," questions of Zionism and Judaism still seem out of place in the pages of *Partisan Review*.

Admissible, then, as an item of ethnic identification, Jewishness was forbidden any further claims. Orthodox Marxism denied the existence of a separate Jewish question; but resistance to orthodox Marxism did not imply political or communal allegiances of another order. Applying the model of heroic defiance to all forms of commitment, even to democratic and fraternal obligations that had been conceived as guarantors of freedom, the independent radicals held themselves aloof from political accountability. To this day some Jewish intellectuals cannot distinguish between the totalitarian conformism that was demanded by the Comintern and the voluntary submission to communal priorities of a functioning Jew.

If anti-Communism was one axis of independence from both totalitarian dictates and democratic or fraternal responsibilities, modernism was the other. Modernism was the arena in which the anti-social instincts, the philosophic pessimism, the disintegrating forces that

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bourgeois democracy feared and tried to stave off could be admitted and given play. A serious student of modern art and culture had to be prepared to follow this vision wherever it might lead, and it certainly led beyond the bounds of his Jewish home. However distant he might otherwise feel from T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and the other apostles of modernism, the American Jewish intellectual shared their contempt for the bourgeoisie, and for his own brand of it, the parochial Jewish community.

One such characteristic judgment can be found in the contribution by Lionel Trilling to the "Under Forty" symposium on "American Literature and the Younger Generation of American Jews" that appeared in the *Contemporary Jewish Record* in 1944. In response to a series of questions on the Jewish writer's attitudes to his Jewishness, Trilling remarked that he could not discover anything in his professional intellectual life which could be specifically traced back to his Jewish birth and rearing—and that the Jewish community could give no sustenance to the American artist or intellectual who was born a Jew. These sentiments gained persuasiveness from the fact that their author described himself as a knowledgeable Jew, raised in an Orthodox home, familiar with "Jewish cultural movements," and qualified to speak as an insider. Moreover, he declared it a point of honor not to deny or escape being Jewish, and he also acknowledged that in declaring this he was not saying very much: "Surely it is at once clear how minimal such a position is—how much it hangs upon only a resistance (and even only a passive one) to the stupidity and brutality which make the Jewish situation so bad as it is."

Yet far from tendering this minimalist position apologetically, Trilling made it the springboard of an attack on what he took to be its opposite, the contrived literature of Jewish self-realization of which Ludwig Lewisohn was then the best-known exponent. Lewisohn, whose Jewishness (unlike Trilling's) had remained an impediment to employment in a university, and who in the 1930's became an outspoken Zionist and critic of assimilation, had written a novel suggesting that intermarriage was a sick response to the Jewish situation, and that a healthier alternative lay in Jewish self-acceptance. Trilling must have known that Lewisohn was but a mediocre writer even before he turned to Jewish themes, yet he used this poor book as the occasion for a wider offensive against affirmative Jewishness:

> This was a literature which attacked the sin of "escaping" the Jewish heritage; its effect, it seems to me, was to make easier the sin of "adjustment" on a wholly neurotic basis. It fostered a willingness to accept exclusion and even to intensify it, a willingness to be provincial and parochial. It is in part accountable for the fact that the Jewish social group on its middle and wealthy levels—that is, where there is enough leisure to allow a conscious consideration of social and spiritual problems—is now one of the most self-indulgent and self-admiring groups it is possible to imagine.

One hears the echo of Karl Marx himself in Trilling's identification of the Jew with the smug bourgeois—and perhaps one hears too the strains of Trilling's analyst, for whom an "adjustment" to Judaism may have seemed more neurotic than separation from it.

TRILLING'S was in any case only the most literate of a number of similar contributions to this symposium. Alfred Kazin, impatient with the dreary middle-class chauvinism he encountered in Zionist clubs, wrote: "I never found chauvinism any more attractive in Jews than in anyone else . . . or lack of imagination and sympathy, or foolish pride that Uzbeks have in those who are only Uzbeks." Clement Greenberg spoke of the suffocating middle-class behavior of American Jews: "No people on earth are more correct, more staid, more provincial, more commonplace, more inexperienced. . . ." Delmore Schwartz and Isaac Rosenfeld did not dwell so heavily on the defects of the smug Jewish middle class but instead described their own alienation from it in terms that echoed the sentiments of many an American writer decrying native provincialism and the leveling influence of mass culture.

So great was the distance these Jews felt between themselves and their community that they voiced no sense of special responsibility toward the fate of their fellow Jews in Hitler's Europe. In 1944—1944!—they expressed their sorrow at the massacre then going on, and nothing more. (Commenting on American Jewish writers a year later, the Yiddish critic Shmuel Niger bitterly observed, "We suffer not only from Jews who are too coarse, but also from Jews who are too sensitive.")

Was there some other American model of Jewish self-realization Trilling could have found, aside from the writings of Ludwig Lewisohn with their supposed "willingness to be provincial and parochial"? The answer is yes. He could have troubled to inspect, for example, a magazine like the *Jewish Frontier*, sponsored by the League for Labor Palestine, whose writers balanced Trilling's own brand of opposition to the "middle class" with a sense of Jewish urgency. "Parochial" may describe the concentration of these writers on the Jewish crisis, but not what such concentration demanded of them. Monitoring the news from London and Berlin, Warsaw and Moscow, Jerusalem and Washington, *Jewish Frontier* was the first American publication to report on the systematic murder of the Jews. The effort to rescue refugees and to establish a Jewish state in Palestine required of these Labor Zionists, and also of many middle-class Jews organized in

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B'nai B'rith and Hadassah, a fine attentiveness to complex geopolitical realities. In fact, an attachment to the Jewish fate, as those intellectuals knew who assumed it, was not overly limiting, but on the contrary much too taxing, too extending. The century's history, after all, was being written on Jewish flesh.

As a young man, Lionel Trilling had written in his notebook, "Being a Jew is like walking in the wind or swimming: you are touched at all points and conscious everywhere." Such a Jew could easily be engulfed once the wind and water began to rise. Rather than exposing themselves to the storm, the New York intellectuals (including Trilling himself) spent the 1940's as a Jewish *arrière-garde*, sheltered by the conviction that they were serving a higher purpose. Only decades later did some of them suddenly discover the Jewish state, which had meanwhile transformed world politics and culture.

"UNEQUIVOCAL INDEPENDENCE" turns out to have been an ideal of unencumbered boyhood. The Jewish intellectuals prided themselves on being good sons—they did not deny their Jewish origins—and in their writings they accorded the world of their childhood at least as much warmth as it had offered them; but no reciprocal sustenance. One should keep in mind, in fairness, that their ambivalence toward Judaism was probably also inherited from parents who were prepared to wear out the old-country traditions until they became quite threadbare, while consecrating their children to something "better." Discouraged in different ways by both their parents and the country that had not yet learned to trust them, they made a virtue of the filial role. It is just this mixture of forced and voluntary alienation that appeals to today's new generation of university academics, eager for reasons of their own to keep alive the heroic image of the non-Jewish Jew and the anti-American American.

Sooner or later, however, youthful independence is expected to give way to maturity, sons are expected to become fathers in their turn. For the Jewish intellectuals this proved to be a very slow process.

In the sphere of culture and the arts, maturity came sooner than in the sphere of politics. The Jewish intellectuals joked about their use of the first-person plural pronoun when writing about America. But the query, *our* forests, Alfred?, intended to mock Kazin's presumption of proprietorship in his interpretation of American literature in *On Native Grounds*, had a serious side to it as well. They all had to perform an audacious act of appropriation, to take a kind of responsibility for American culture, and to do so without necessarily relinquishing their identity as Jews. In scholarship, possession of American and English culture could be acquired through knowledge and authority. But in the creation of works of imaginative literature, a deeper self-disclosure was required, for without the release of the Jew in himself, a writer simply could not free his own voice.

Once again, Lionel Trilling's contribution to the "Under Forty" symposium is an instructive historical source. "I know of writers who have used their Jewish experiences as the subject of excellent work," he wrote, but "I know of no writer in English who has added a micromillimeter to his stature by 'realizing his Jewishness,' although I know of some who have curtailed their promise by trying to heighten their Jewish consciousness."

Forcing the imagination is indisputably hard on literature, and few programmatic novels of any sort ever transcend the scaffolding of their intentions. But it was characteristic of Trilling, and of the 1940's, that he should have seen only this side of the problem, while the fiction he himself wrote betrayed the opposite weakness: if no writer could add to his stature by artificially "realizing his Jewishness," a writer could certainly diminish his stature by deliberately refusing to realize it.

Trilling's only novel, *The Middle of the Journey*, is a nearly-great work of fiction. There is no better introduction to the moral and political crisis that overtook young progressive idealists in the late 1930's than this resonant story of John Laskell, a young man who recuperates from the sudden death of his fiancée and his own near-fatal illness by convalescing at the rural home of friends. These friends, the Crooms, are ineducable fellow-travelers, unable to face human limitations whether these take the form of simple mortality or the fact of human wickedness. They cannot bear to hear about Laskell's brush with death; they mistake their unprincipled, selfish handyman for a noble savage; they deny the testimony of Gifford Maxim, a character modeled on the real-life figure of Whittaker Chambers, who is trying to quit his career as a Communist agent without being killed. In the course of the narrative Trilling brilliantly exposes the intellectual, moral, and political failures of liberals like the Crooms who destroy the good they claim to uphold.

But there is something dead in Trilling's rendering of his protagonist John Laskell that keeps the book this side of greatness. Laskell, identified by almost all critics with the author's perspective, has no past, and none of the social substantiality that Trilling as a critic so appreciated in other writers. Yet it seems clear not only from Trilling's biography but from the context of the book and the problem it addresses that Laskell should have been a Jew—"touched at all points and conscious everywhere." Whatever Trilling's artistic reasons for making Laskell a man without a culture, he did thereby "curtail the promise" of his book.

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Indeed, something similar could be said of the early fiction of Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud. But both Bellow and Malamud later overcame this problem. The artistic distance between Bellow's *Dangling Man* and his *Herzog*, and between Malamud's *The Natural* and his *The Magic Barrel*, suggests in these cases too that "Jewish consciousness" had to be fully liberated from cosmopolitan parochialism (if that term be allowed) before the American Jewish writer could produce an American classic.

Trilling might more accurately have observed that the literary imagination could not be forced in *either* direction, and that Jewish writers would seize the cultural initiative only when Jews themselves began to feel at home in America: literature may be autonomous in setting its own goals, but it can never be independent of its social and cultural sources. And there is an irony here, for the very embourgeoisement that the young (as opposed to the older) Trilling and his fellows professed to find so repugnant was what made it possible for them to detach themselves without strain from the world of their parents and to join without guilt the literary chorus of anti-Babbittry and anti-Main Street. Their accelerating distaste for the Jewish community from which they had emerged was only the other side of that same process of acculturation, and every bit as parochial as the ethnocentricity they were attacking. As the Jewish bourgeoisie tried to keep up with the Joneses, so they were trying to keep up with the (T.S.) Eliots, and both began to succeed at exactly the same time.

IN THE political sphere, the assumption of mature responsibility was a more complicated undertaking, requiring as it did not only the cultivation of a voice of one's own, but a felt concern for the larger political good. And here, too, "parochial" self-realization was required, first, because no one can be trusted to benefit mankind who is not prepared to protect his small part of it, and, second, because American democracy encouraged the practice of enlightened self-interest as a legitimate ground of public service. On this score, it must be said that perhaps the majority of the New York intellectuals have never completed the transformation from sons into fathers. The story of those who did may one day be counted the truly remarkable achievement of the New York intellectuals as a whole.

The ones I am speaking of did not relinquish the Marxist club in order to go on smashing idols, as Mark Shechner puts it in his revealing image, but in order to smash the Marxist club itself, and with it the idol of the intellectual as righteous avenger or haloed outcast. I do not have in mind Philip Rahv, who in the late 60's came to believe that the old radicalism could live again in the New Left, or Rahv's firm opponents in that belief, whose own brand of nostalgic socialism has nevertheless allowed them to maintain to this day their posture of marginality. Rather I refer to those who have come to be called neoconservatives, and are called that name for the simple reason that they offer no apology for their defense of their country's freedoms and laws, or for their desire to conserve family, religion, and a predominantly market economy.

Irving Kristol says that the neoconservatives' approach to the world is more "rabbinic" than "prophetic," a distinction that explains a good deal about the antagonism they arouse. Any number of modern Jewish intellectuals had found it possible to identify with the biblical Prophets as fellow outsiders, individualists, poets, voices of conscience, and above all, scourges of the rotten rich. But Jewish civilization has survived through the ages thanks to the rabbis, who had, among their other distinctions, weeded out the few reliable Prophets from the many more false ones against whom they maintained a constant vigilance. Intellectuals themselves in their devotion to texts and ideas, the rabbis were also teachers, guides, indispensable links in a chain between past and future, servants of the community. In taking for his intellectual model the rabbi rather than the prophet, Kristol challenges the reign of the radical and the iconoclast, if not the entire "adversary culture" (Trilling's phrase) that has dominated modern intellectual life.

Though opponents of neoconservatism accuse it of hard-heartedness, or selfish conceit, it seems rather to have been born of political penance. The discipline of much neoconservative thought is rooted in self-examination on the part of those who lived long enough to see the consequences of their youthful enthusiasms. The "two cheers" for capitalism offered by Kristol and other former radicals seems to correspond to two major failures of their erstwhile Marxism.

For one thing, as Sidney Hook writes in his recent autobiography, *Out of Step*, "We were so convinced that capitalism was doomed that we ignored its resources of recovery"; once the rhetoric was stripped away, capitalism showed itself better equipped than socialism to provide for the greatest economic good of the greatest number, because it responded more vigorously to the actual requirements of people, and because the resultant economic growth strengthened democratic institutions.

For another thing, the intellectuals had conveniently disregarded the will-to-power concealed in socialist prescription, as it is concealed in all systems that do not openly accredit competition. Socialist intellectuals do not often admit that one of their great incentives for supporting state control of the source of supply and the regulation of the market is the power that accrues to them when businessmen are bridled. If we were to look for mean motives, of the kind intellectuals

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are quick to find in others, we would put them under suspicion for their insistence that the realm of ideas alone remain beyond the control of government, while other forms of ambition are to be forever chained. Neoconservatives, having lost their faith in intellectual infallibility, tend to be correspondingly more respectful of other areas of initiative.

And what, finally, of the Jews? One of the greatest moral and intellectual failures of the New York intellectuals was their disregard of the Jewish fate, both before and during World War II and in the decades that followed. Curiously, though many other sectors of the American community—including the press, various levels of government, and Jewish organizations—have come under indictment in recent years for their apathy in the face of evil, if not for their passive complicity in it, no such accusations have been leveled against the group of whom the most might have been expected and from whom so little was forthcoming. The myth of "unequivocal independence," or what amounts to the same thing, unequivocal irresponsibility, is apparently still so firmly attached to the intellectuals that no one sees fit to judge them by the same standards that are applied to their fellow citizens.

The intellectuals themselves have been uncharacteristically shy in reappraising this part of their past, but we need not take their silence completely at face value. Consider the strange case of Philip Rahv: although no one continued to insist so long or so stridently on his Marxism, or to demonstrate a greater lack of apparent interest in the disposition of the Jews, upon his death in 1973 Rahv left his money to the state of Israel. In trying to account for this strange leavetaking, William Barrett has recalled a glum conversation the two men had many years earlier about the lack of conviction of Americans. "I wish I were in Israel," Barrett recalls Rahv saying with yearning, "at least people there believe in something." Barrett sees the posthumous bequest as an expression both of Rahv's pessimism over his own world and his dream of something better, elsewhere. Because by the time of his death no Communist land could be imagined as that better place, Israel was invoked as a lone last refuge of political idealism.

If Barrett is right, however, Rahv's quixotic testament was no less a mistake than his old indifference to the fate of the Jews. There were indeed those who hoped, however belatedly, that a socialist Israel would somehow replace their lost ideal of a socialist Russia or a socialist America; they were bound to be disappointed once again. Israel is not that place; no place is. And anyway, they had misdiagnosed the problem: bourgeois society was never so flawed as was their dream of a new kind of human being who could transcend it.

Other Jewish intellectuals have seemed to draw sounder conclusions. Saul Bellow's *To Jerusalem and Back* (1976) is not a romantic's hankering for a higher Israel but an intellectual's attempt to destroy the ideas that seek to destroy the Jewish state. Similarly, the neoconservatives' passion for the defense of the free world, which they refer to without irony as the free world, and which emphatically includes the state of Israel, seeks to repair former sins of omission by themselves and others. Pitched now against their own youthful pieties, these former radicals introduce into the world of ideas a rare sense of political responsibility. No one reading the *Partisan Review* manifesto of 1937 could have foreseen so remarkable a transformation. No one reading the latest crop of books about the New York intellectuals would dream that the intellectual life could encompass so hopeful a possibility.

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Population Scares

P. T. Bauer

1.

SINCE the 1960's, population pressure and growth have been widely regarded as prime causes of Third World poverty and prime obstacles to economic development. For instance, Robert S. McNamara wrote in 1973: "To put it simply: the greatest single obstacle to the economic and social advancement of the majority of peoples in the underdeveloped world is rampant population growth . . . the threat of unmanageable population pressures is very much like the threat of nuclear war. . . . Both threats can and will have catastrophic consequences unless they are dealt with rapidly and rationally." More recently, McNamara's successor as president of the World Bank, Barber B. Conable, has argued along similar lines, though in less colorful words, in an address to the World Resources Institute of Washington.

In line with this view, massive and persistent advocacy of birth control emanates worldwide from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and from numerous other official and unofficial organizations. According to such organizations, so imperative is it for Third World governments to promote population control that they should be induced or pressed to do so by preferential treatment and by earmarking foreign aid for this purpose.

Not surprisingly, then, in many Third World countries, population-control policies already operate with varying degrees of intensity. The most famous case is India where from July to December 1976 more than six million people were sterilized, many thousands of them forcibly. The methods and results of this program were encouraged by the West. Thus at the height of the campaign, *New Scientist*, a magazine generally sympathetic to the Third World, reported: "The Western aid agencies . . . either kept quiet or applauded the sterilization program. World Bank President, Robert McNamara, took time off from his busy schedule during his Indian visit to call upon the Indian Health and Family Planning Minister to congratulate him for the Indian government's political will and determination in popularizing family planning."

Ideas like McNamara's, and the policies they produce, rest on the following explicit or clearly implicit assumptions: economic performance and progress depend critically on certain quantifiable resources per head, primarily land, but also capital; income per head is a sound measure of economic well-being and can serve as its proxy; population trends can be forecast reliably for decades ahead; and Third World people do not know about birth control, they procreate heedless of consequences, and the West must persuade or even force them to change their reproductive habits.

These ideas all go counter to simple evidence and to widely accepted moral principles.

2.

RAPID POPULATION GROWTH has not prevented economic progress either in the West or in the contemporary Third World. The population of the Western world has more than quadrupled since the middle of the 18th century. Over the same period, real income per head is estimated to have increased fivefold at least. Much of this increase took place when population was growing as fast as in most of the contemporary Third World, or even faster.

In fact, in the Third World itself, population growth has often gone hand-in-hand with rapid material advance. In the 1890's Malaya was a sparsely-populated area of hamlets and fishing villages. By the 1930's, it had become a country with large cities and extensive plantation and mining operations. During these four decades the population rose through immigration and natural increase from about one-and-a-half million to about six million. This greatly enlarged population enjoyed much higher material standards and lived longer than the small numbers of the 1890's.

Since World War II, other Third World countries have also combined rapid population in-

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crease with rapid, even spectacular, economic growth for decades on end. These include Taiwan, Hong Kong, Kenya, the Ivory Coast, Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil. Conversely, over much of the Third World what obstructs economic advance is sparseness of population, which presents obstacles more effective than those supposedly created by population pressure. Thus, sparseness of population circumscribes the scope for enterprise by precluding the construction of transport facilities and communications and by retarding the spread of markets and of new ideas and methods.

In current public discourse more specific adverse effects of population growth are often also alleged: prospective shortage of food; exhaustion of minerals; and emergence of large-scale unemployment. These apprehensions are unfounded. They rest on invalid notions such as that methods of production and patterns of consumption do not respond to changes in resource availabilities; that labor and capital cannot be substituted for land in production or consumption; that there will be no technical progress; and that people procreate regardless of circumstances and do not adjust their reproductive habits to changing conditions.

3.

Nor is shortage of land and of investable resources a critical obstacle to economic achievement and progress. In particular, sustained prosperity (as distinct from occasional windfalls) owes little or nothing to natural resources. Examples in the past include Holland, much of it drained from the sea, and Venice, a wealthy world power built on a few mud flats. In our own time, there are West Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, to name only the most obvious instances of countries that have achieved prosperity without much in the way of land or natural resources.

On the other hand, amid abundant land and vast natural resources, the Indians of the Americas before Columbus remained wretchedly poor, without domestic animals and without even the wheel, when much of Europe, with far less land, was already rich. To this day many millions of extremely poor people have much cultivable land. Indeed they often live in areas where land is a free good. Shortage of land, actually or potentially cultivable, does not explain the extreme backwardness of the Indian populations of Central and South America, or of the Pygmies and Aborigines in Asia and Africa.

Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, the much-publicized famines in the Third World have nothing to do with shortage of land. Such famines do not occur in the densely-populated areas of the Far East and elsewhere, but in the sparsely-populated regions of Africa, especially Ethiopia, Uganda, and the Sahel. In these areas the hazards of subsistence agriculture are exacerbated by such policies and circumstances as suppression of private trade, with consequent absence of reserve stocks and trading links; persecution, even expulsion, of productive groups, especially ethnic minorities; large-scale confiscation of property; forcible collectivization; restrictions on the inflow of capital and on the import of farming implements and of consumer goods; civil conflict and absence of public security. In some instances, maintenance of wasteful tribal systems of land tenure has also inhibited productive agriculture.

Incidentally, abundance of cultivable land is quite compatible with clamor for land reform and confiscation of established farms and plantations developed and improved by the efforts and savings of productive people. Who would not welcome a free gift of valuable assets?

In all societies beyond the simplest subsistence stage, there are significant differences in economic attainment and income among individuals and groups with access to the same physical resources, notably land. Salient examples of such group differences in the same country are those among Chinese, Indians, and Malays in Malaysia; Chinese and others elsewhere in Southeast Asia; Parsees, Jains, Marwari, and others in India; Greeks and Turks in Cyprus; Asians and Africans in East and Central Africa; Ibo and others in Nigeria; and Chinese, Lebanese, and West Indians in the Caribbean.

For long periods these prosperous groups were not allowed to own land, or had their access to it severely restricted. The experience of the Huguenots, Jews, and Nonconformists in the West also makes clear that physical resources are not critical for economic achievement.

No more than shortage of land is shortage of capital a critical obstacle to progress. If it were, large numbers of very poor people could not have become prosperous within very short periods of time, as they have done the world over—for instance, the immigrant communities in North America and Southeast Asia. Even very poor people can and often do generate capital, by sacrificing leisure for work, transferring labor and land to more productive use (for example, from subsistence production to cash crops). Again, very poor and often illiterate traders have accumulated capital by opening up local markets.

Moreover, as a factor in economic progress, the quality of investment is more significant than its volume. Expenditure does not become productive by being termed investment. Apart from much other evidence, this is plain from the numerous failed "prestige" projects in the Third World. And even when investment does issue in productive capital formation, it is pertinent that such physical capital formation is not a major factor in long-term development. The late Simon Kuznets estimated that increase in physical capital

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and in labor together have accounted for less than one-tenth of long-term growth in the West over the last two centuries. Spread of knowledge, changes in attitudes and habits, redeployment of resources, and technical change have been far more important as independent variables in economic advance than has capital formation, let alone the volume of investable funds.

4.

IN DISCUSSIONS concerning the need for population control, per-capita income is frequently invoked as an index of economic welfare, even of well-being as such. This practice issues in anomalies. The birth of a child immediately reduces income per head within the family, and also in the country as a whole. But do the parents feel worse off? Would they be happier if they could have no children, or if some of their children died?

The relatively large proportion of children in Third World countries is often described and decried as the burden of dependency. This terminology implies that children are merely a cost. But children give satisfaction; they are outlets for affection; and they enable people to project themselves into the future. In addition to yielding such psychic income, children often also contribute significantly to actual family income, serve as support for old age, and sometimes bring prestige and influence. In all these contexts, the benefits to the parents outweigh the costs; and the benefit from one highly successful child exceeds the cost of the others.

5.

THESE CONSIDERATIONS shed light on the difficulty Western agencies have experienced in getting people throughout the Third World to use modern birth-control devices.

For many decades now, cheap Western-style consumer goods such as hardware, cosmetics, soft drinks, watches, and cameras have been conspicuous trade goods in Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, West Africa, and Latin America. Soon after becoming available in the West, the transistor radio was ubiquitous in South Asia and the Middle East, Latin America, and in African cities. By contrast, condoms, intrauterine devices, and the pill have so far spread only slowly in much of the Third World, even when heavily subsidized. Indeed, these contraceptives are often absent where sophisticated articles of feminine hygiene are on sale. They are largely or even wholly absent in Third World areas where mortality has declined, which suggests that the reason large families are wanted there is not merely in order to replace children who die young.

It is a reasonable conclusion that the demand for cheap Western contraceptives is limited not because people in the Third World are ignorant of them but rather because they do not want to restrict their families, or prefer other, more traditional ways of doing so.

In short, in the Third World (as in the West) the children who are born are generally desired. To deny this amounts to saying that Third World parents procreate no matter what. This view treats people with unwarranted condescension or contempt, which in turn soon becomes a justification for coercion.

To be sure, those who advocate pressing Third World governments to promote population control often argue that they do not propose compulsion but intend only to widen the opportunities of people by assisting in the spread of contraceptive knowledge. Yet in many Third World countries, especially in Asia and Africa, that advice, education, and persuasion in practice shade into coercion. In most of these societies people are more subject to authority than in the West. And especially in recent years the prospects of many individuals have come to depend on official favors. Promotion in the civil service, allocation of drivers' licenses (including even to operate taxis in parts of India), access to subsidized credit, official housing, and other facilities have all been linked at times to restriction of family size. Forcible mass sterilization in India was only the limiting case.

Such policies must provoke acute anxiety, tension, and conflict, and they raise the most serious moral and political problems. If pressed home, they leave behind a dejected, inert population.

6.

FROM Malthus to McNamara, ambitious forecasts of long-term population trends have been an integral part of recurrent population scares. They are prominent in the current insistence on Third World population control. Yet for many reasons only the roughest forecasts of long-term population trends in the Third World are warranted.

Over the decades, major political, cultural, and economic changes will occur in much of the Third World. Both the changes and their demographic impact are unpredictable. This applies even to mortality trends, and much more so to fertility trends. People do respond in their reproductive habits to changed conditions. But they often do so in unexpected ways, which compounds the uncertainties of the changes themselves. This applies particularly in the context of such a huge and deeply diverse aggregate as the Third World.

Thus, in recent decades in some Third World countries, economic improvement has resulted not in lower but in higher fertility. Or again, in some of these countries urban and rural fertility rates are about the same, while in others there are wide differences. The relationship of fertility to social class and occupation is also much more varied in the Third World than in the West.

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There is, however, one relationship of considerable generality which has been emphasized by John C. Caldwell. This is that systematic restriction of family size in the Third World is practiced primarily by women who have adopted Western attitudes toward childbearing and childrearing, as a result of exposure to Western edution, media, and contacts. Their attitude to fertility control does not depend on income, status, or urbanization, but on modernization—that is, Westernization.

Caldwell's conclusion is more plausible and solidly-based than the widely-held view that higher incomes lead to reduced fertility. It is true that in the West, and in the Westernized parts of the Third World, higher incomes and lower fertility are often, though by no means always, associated. But it is not the case that higher incomes as such lead to smaller families. Both the higher incomes and the smaller families reflect greater ambition for material welfare for oneself and one's family. Both, in other words, reflect a change in motivation. By contrast, when parental incomes are increased as a result of subsidies or windfalls, without a change in attitudes, the parents are likely to have more children, not fewer. This last point is pertinent to the proposals of many Western observers who contradictorily urge both population control and also more aid to the poor with large families.

Deficiencies in vital statistics also preclude reliable forecasts. In much of the Third World there is no registration of births and deaths, and even where there is, it is often seriously incomplete. In 1963 the population of Nigeria was officially estimated at 55.6 million; one expert, however, Peter Kilby, put it at 37.1 million. Estimates of the population of the People's Republic of China differ by many millions. These considerations should help place into perspective such practices as forecasting to the nearest million the population of the world for the year 2000, or publishing statistics of the growth of income or of agricultural production per head in Third World countries to fractions of 1 percent.

However, some unambitious and broad conclusions about Third World population trends may be offered. Although the speed and extent of Westernization are uncertain, the process is likely to make some headway. This would result in some decline in age-specific fertility. But the large proportion of young people and the prevailing reproductive rates will ensure significant increases in population in the principal regions of the Third World over the next few decades. Population growth in the Third World as a whole is unlikely to fall much below 2 percent, and may for some years continue around 2.5 percent.*

7.

More specific forecasts would be conjectural. Nor are they necessary. The economic achievement of the peoples of the Third World will not depend on their numbers. It will depend on personal, cultural, and political factors—that is, on their attitudes and mores.

Anyone wishing to influence those attitudes and mores in a direction favorable to economic development and general well-being can best do so by extending the range of external commercial contacts available to ordinary people in the Third World, especially contacts with the West. In the past such contacts have been powerful agents of voluntary changes in attitudes and mores, especially those bearing on economic advance. There is no reason to doubt that similar contacts can have the same effect in the future—and without the damaging and morally objectionable political and economic effects of official pressure on people in their most private and vital concerns.

* It may be appropriate to mention parenthetically one result of the likely population growth in the Third World. Fertility rates differ substantially within the Third World. But fertility and reproduction rates are generally much higher than in the West. If these differences persist, then the population of the West (including for this purpose Japan and Australasia), will, over the years, shrink considerably as compared with Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such a development must in the not too distant future have wide political and cultural consequences.

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The Feminization of the American Left

James Nuechterlein

IT IS ironic, in this putatively conservative age, that such a radical social movement as feminism should be so pervasive an influence. It would be difficult to imagine any more revolutionary a transformation that could have occurred in our common life than the rearrangement of relations between the sexes that has developed over the past two decades. What surprises the more is that this transformation should have gone so relatively unopposed and even unremarked. Those rearguard counterrevolutionary skirmishes that have occurred have been put down with little effort, and radical recastings of our language, mores, family relations—even our very definitions of self—have been received as little more than the natural unfolding of events.*

Even as feminism has worked its revolutionary ways with minimal notice, so its correlative doctrines have come to be accepted as being in the nature of things. The spillover effects of feminist thought are everywhere apparent, but they have often escaped being named for what they are. Not the least of these involves a tendency in politics that can without extravagance be labeled the feminization of the American Left.

It is necessary at the outset to emphasize that the concept of feminization implies nothing about the personal behavioral or psychological qualities of those who hold to its tenets. The politics of personal insult does not add to our analytical understanding, and the idea of feminization should not be interpreted as a *tu quoque* response to those who employ the term "macho politics" in dismissing conservatism as a displacement of sexual anxieties onto public life. Feminization suggests a certain set of political reflexes and beliefs, not a tendency of personal behavior.

Nor, for that matter, should feminization and feminism, for all the obvious connections between them, be seen as necessarily equivalent terms. One major strand of feminism, after all, argues that women will only be able to achieve their proper ends by cultivating qualities quite contrary to the stereotypical attributes of the "feminine." For feminists like these, feminism and feminization are not at all identical; indeed, they view the latter as an impediment to the realization of the former. (Other feminists, of course, see no such contradiction.)

Feminization, as understood here, suggests the establishment of traditionally feminine virtues (those normally associated with the private realm) as norms of behavior for public life. It indicates an ethic of noncoercion, a preference for emotion over rational analysis and for noncompetitive modes of social interaction, a focus on being rather than doing and on interpersonal relations as the primary preoccupation of the good life. The personal, the feminists have told us, is political; feminization proposes not simply that the personal has political implications but that the (feminine) personal should become the preferred model of the political.

At the heart of the feminized imagination lies a reluctance concerning the exercise of power, which becomes either an atavism to be transcended or, if it cannot entirely be gotten around, at least a falling away from political morality ("power politics") that can never truly be participated in with good conscience. It used to be supposed that those who hesitated to traffic in power thereby excluded themselves from active participation in public life. The new refusal of power takes what once would have been dismissed as utopian and makes it into the standard against which politicians should measure themselves.

IT WOULD be a mistake to see this tendency as an entirely new development (which is why it cannot be viewed simply as a product of contemporary feminism). Liberalism

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* The defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment might be seen as evidence to the contrary, but it seems clear not only that the ERA commanded majority support but that even many of its strongest supporters came to understand —though they hesitated to say so out loud—that its passage would be essentially redundant. Society had already conceded to women the benefits they originally hoped to extract from the amendment, so ERA's supporters found it possible tacitly to live with, even if they could not openly acquiesce in, its rejection.

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has often been associated with a suspicion of power and with a general set of urgings that its opponents dismiss as "soft" and its proponents uphold as "humane." Liberalism and qualities of the feminine (both positive and negative) have for a very long time been set in opposition to contrasting equivalencies of conservatism and the masculine.

Nor can the idea of feminization be dismissed as the invention of conservatives set on the discrediting of left-wing impulses. In his book *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941*, Robert S. McElvaine explicitly and favorably employs the term to characterize left-wing reactions to economic catastrophe. The Depression, he argues, spurred the emergence of "moral economics," an ethic of cooperation, compassion, and sharing.

This represented a movement away from the predominant marketplace—and male—values that had typically prevailed in the economic realm. The "feminization" of the 30's, in McElvaine's view, discredited the "self-centered, aggressive, competitive, 'male,' ethic of the 1920's." Values that had previously been reserved to the feminine sphere—the private world of home and church—now took their rightful place in the public realm.

Yet if the association of feminization with the Left is not new, that is not to say that it has always held. The Great Depression may have given rise to a feminized "moral economics," as McElvaine suggests, but a number of students of the era have emphasized rather the "hard-boiled" manner that characterized the 30's and behind which liberal and radical reformers carried on their activities. New Dealers differentiated themselves from their Progressive forebears by their self-conscious rejection of "sentimentality" and their gruff, masculine, no-nonsense approach to social change. As the historian William Leuchtenburg has said, "If the archetypical progressive was Jane Addams singing 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,' the representative New Dealer was Harry Hopkins betting on the horses at Laurel Race Track."

There certainly did exist what we might call the Eleanor Roosevelt wing of Depression-era reform, but it was more than offset within the New Deal by those like Hopkins, Rex Tugwell, and Thurman Arnold who wanted no part of what Leuchtenburg has termed "the Methodist-parsonage morality" characteristic of certain strands of the American progressive tradition. Mrs. Roosevelt may have dreamed of a transformation of human nature, but most New Dealers focused instead on the recasting of institutions. They envisaged new structures of justice, not new burgeonings of love. Enlightened self-interest held more promise for progressive change than did moral regeneration. If New Dealers had feminized ends, they mostly expected to realize them through nonfeminized means.

Those to the Left of the New Deal—and there were many such in the 30's—had even less patience for feminized sensibilities. Marxist radicals prided themselves on (and were envied by others for) their tough-minded rejection of liberal sentimentalities. Liberals had deluded themselves that they could unite social with individual values, collectivist ends with private purposes. For those certain they had caught on to the ineluctable laws of history and society—laws that operated independently of human striving—the compromises of liberalism (even New Deal liberalism) could only appear soft and unscientific.

Marxism was not just a political faith, it was an intellectual discipline, one that distinguished the tough-minded from the tender-minded. The cooperative commonwealth would evolve from the trajectory of history, not the feckless strivings and moral yearnings of liberals (of whatever stripe). New Dealers might suppose themselves free of progressive sentimentality, but to Marxists they were still too caught up in the illusions of personal morality to subject themselves to the disciplines of public justice.

In the postwar era, the decline of poverty and the emergence of the cold war crippled Marxism (and radicalism in general), but the preference for tough-mindedness on the Left remained. Reinhold Niebuhr, intellectual and moral mentor to a whole generation of liberals, discarded his earlier sympathies for Marxist analysis but retained a withering disregard for liberal sentimentality. His doctrine of Christian realism (with or without the Christianity) instructed postwar progressives—chastened by the loss of liberal and Marxist illusions alike—to take seriously the necessities and ambiguities of power and to give up their accustomed optimism and moralism for new categories of tragedy, irony, and paradox. Among major reform thinkers of this century—and Niebuhr remained throughout his life an authentic man of the Left—it would be impossible to find a less feminized imagination.

One may question the depth to which Niebuhrian perspectives ever really penetrated on the Left, but there can be no doubt that they did for a time dominate intellectual fashion. The Kennedy administration virtually bristled with masculine assertiveness—recall the Green Berets and the counterinsurgency doctrine—and its leader made unmistakably clear his uneasiness with "soft" versions of liberalism. The troubled relationship between the President and his United Nations Ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, typified the conflict. At one point Stevenson urged that the U.S. make a major push in the General Assembly for general and complete disarmament. Kennedy knew better than to take such a suggestion seriously but was prepared to accept it as a propaganda move; it came to him as a matter of surprise (and no small annoyance) that Stevenson

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not only approached the issue with literal-minded earnestness but took it as his duty to lecture the President to do so as well. Stevenson's temporizing instincts during the Cuban missile crisis stirred the same tensions and reflected the same conflict.

IF LIBERALISM for so long resisted its feminizing tendencies, when and why did things turn around? Above all else, as with so much in contemporary American life, looms the specter of Vietnam. A war gone terribly wrong aroused protest not only against itself but against virtually any expression of American power. In the retrospective shadow of Vietnam, cold-war realism came under severe negative reassessment, and much of that reassessment focused on the doctrine's purportedly exaggerated preoccupation with toughness and strength.

More generally, the intense moralism that came to characterize both the antiwar movement and the central domestic issue of the time, the civil-rights crusade, created an atmosphere in the political culture in which feminization flourished. Even after the slogans and the chanting of the 60's died down, the sentimentality that lay behind them remained, as Michael Novak, commenting on a 1972 New York City campaign rally for George McGovern, noted: " 'Together at the Garden with McGovern' . . . was as sentimental an effusion of a peculiarly American idealism, teardrop for teardrop, as any the Garden has ever sheltered. . . . *'If only,'* Dionne Warwick crystallized the mood, *'we have love!'* "* It requires a thoroughly feminized imagination to suppose that politics can be reduced to love.

The disaster of the McGovern campaign acted, to some degree at least, as a reality principle for the Left, and a good deal of sentimental radicalism drifted out of mainstream American politics. One might expect that the decline of radicalism would bring a commensurate decline of feminization, but that does not appear to have been the case. If anything, feminization appears more dominant an influence on the Left than it has been in the past, even if, consistent with the fading of radicalism, it makes less dramatic an impression.

In explaining why that is so, again one necessarily begins with the women's movement. Even for those relatively untouched by feminism *per se*, the women's movement—embracing women's issues and, more extensively, women's sensibilities —has exercised an enormous influence. It is now a commonplace of our culture that women bring to virtually every aspect of public life not just special needs and interests but special perspectives and insights that have hitherto been accorded insufficient attention and that, properly attended to, will soften and humanize the harsh edges of our civilization. As already suggested, the women's movement has kept alive radical possibilities in a generally conservative age. For those on the Left, it is in many ways the only game in town. Feminization provides a dynamic for left-wing thought that it would today otherwise lack.

A second reason has to do with the fact that no one believes seriously in socialism any more, except as a protest ideal with which to clobber capitalism. Old-line socialists saw their movement as a scientific alternative to capitalism's inefficiencies and contradictions, but the suspension of disbelief now required to believe socialism economically preferable to capitalism is such that even unreconstructed Stalinists cannot be expected to achieve it.

As for the New Left, it based its preference for socialism on moral rather than economic grounds, but since the humane democratic socialism for which it originally professed to yearn had no empirical referents, it could maintain the adherence only of those for whom utopian longings provide adequate sustenance. Even in the realms of pure theory, there was little genuine solace. Postwar Marxists in the West, appalled by what orthodox Marxism had wrought, focused their attention on the young, "humanistic" Marx, but even then they had to involve themselves in extensive interpretive contortions to make his determinedly materialistic version of alienation coincide with their own existential understanding of the term.

Today, in America at least, socialism consists of little more than vague expressive affirmations and repudiations. An Irving Howe indicates his insistence on "decency" and his rejection of "mean-spiritedness," all the while confessing that though he knows capitalism to be morally inadequate he is not at all sure how socialism might be made to work in practice. One admires his modesty, but wonders what is left of his ideology.

Liberals are similarly lacking in ideological substance. The "vital center" of the postwar generation has gone slack. The New Deal generation thought it knew how to accomplish substantial social change, and its successors in the Kennedy-Johnson years saw the New Frontier and the Great Society as the culminations in prosperity of the dreams of social reconstruction born in the Depression. But things have not worked out very well. The War on Poverty foundered in stagflation and social impediments. The Keynesian economics that was to smooth its way, impressive in its early accomplishments, ran aground when politicians proved reluctant to impose its downside disciplines (it may also have paid too little attention to the supply side of the economic ledger), and the social-engineering assumptions on which so much of the reform drive depended turned out to be contrary to fact. It proved to

* "Needing Niebuhr Again," COMMENTARY, September 1972.

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be even more difficult for government to reconstruct shattered lives and communities than to fine-tune the economy.

It is feminization that has to a large extent filled the ideological vacuum that exists among both radicals and liberals. It provides a political resting place and a sustaining vocabulary for those committed to the Left (if by no other criterion than that they oppose the Right) while they attempt to put together substantive replacements for discredited socialisms and Great Societies. Feminization has become a refuge for a Left in ideological crisis.

Nowhere is this more apparent than among mainstream church groups, which have become increasingly visible and active as sources of political enthusiasm on the Left. A while back a writer in the *Nation* declared that "the religious Left is the only Left we've got." That exaggerates matters, but it does correctly suggest both the heightened political profile of the religious Left and the degree to which liberal Protestantism now defines its existence in political terms.

Liberal Protestantism and feminization have always had a close affinity for each other, a point established in social terms—at least for the 19th century—in Ann Douglas's *The Feminization of American Culture* and in political terms by Robert S. McElvaine's previously-noted study of the Depression era. For McElvaine, the contrast of masculine and feminine economic values translates directly into religious terms. Where the traditional male marketplace virtues encouraged "aggressiveness, toughness, competition, and pursuit of self-interest," the female instincts brought forth by the Depression "emphasized cooperation, sharing, compassion, service to others, self-denial—in short, the traditional Judeo-Christian ethic."

One sees how a Left in intellectual and empirical trouble turns naturally to feminization. Identification with "the Judeo-Christian ethic," after all, covers a multitude of lesser sins. Questions as to whether an ideology works can only be seen as quibbles in the light of such an exalted moral sanction. And even if the quibbles persist, feminization still functions as a formidable weapon for bashing the Right, which is associated by definition with those "male" values that lie at the opposite moral pole from cooperation, sharing, and—above all—compassion.

By setting up the terms of debate in this manner, of course, the Left arranges things in such a way that it cannot lose. Who would not prefer compassion to callousness? Yet even as the feminized politics of compassion offers the Left an apparent moral advantage, it also reveals, in its inescapable tendency to sentimentality, feminization's fatal analytical weaknesses.

As Mickey Kaus—himself a liberal—has argued ("Up from Altruism," *New Republic*, December 15, 1986), compassion "is a miserable basis for politics," because it "carries the unmistakable implication of dependence and piteousness on the part of those on the receiving end of the sentiment." The end of reform politics, Kaus says, "should be not to increase the incidence of compassion, but to reduce the opportunity for it. Compassion isn't politics." When people with particular needs turn to government for specific aid, "it is (or should be) as self-reliant citizens, and it's a terrible mistake to mix up their plight with the 'weak and unfortunate' charity cases. Charity is a noble impulse. But it is not the relation of free, equal citizens."

Compassion politics is not only sentimental, it is impractical: "It provides no principle to tell us when our abstract compassionate impulses should stop." Kaus suggests that liberals should base their case for affirmative government not on the illimitable demands of altruistic compassion but on the politics of the general interest, by which government programs for particular groups can be justified by their contribution to the general good (economic growth, social stability, etc.). One sees in Kaus the tough-minded tradition of the Left: "If liberals build a new, lasting movement, it won't be because they convince enough people to be compassionate, or because they convince enough people that they are entitled to have others be compassionate toward them, but because enough people correctly see their own interest in solving the problems of others."

To the feminized political sensibility, such arguments will inevitably appear stunted, crabbed, even morally tone-deaf. Why, it will be wondered, must we restrict ourselves to a politics of enlightened self-interest? Can we not expect more of ourselves? Do not, in fact, our deepest religious and moral principles demand more?

Such a reaction has an obvious attraction and a surface plausibility, but it reveals feminization's characteristic confusion of spheres. We cannot, simply by force of moral will, conduct public policy according to the rubrics of private life. Charity is noble (and those who do not participate in it on a community as well as individual basis *are* morally tone-deaf) but it is not politics. What free and equal citizens of a society owe one another in the public forum is not love but justice. Love may motivate us, but it cannot provide the substance of our politics. Love, after all, gives without counting the costs, and a politics that does not count costs is feckless and irresponsible.

Thus, for example, while social-welfare policies constitute an essential element in a just society, such policies must always be administered with careful regard for their effects on their recipients. We want to be, as Kaus notes, a society of free and equal citizens, not one of benefactors and dependents. There will always be those among us who cannot care for themselves and to whom

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we owe support, but a society that in ordinary circumstances views any substantial portion of its citizenry as objects of charity has succumbed to a muddled and decadent public philosophy.

All of which explains why Mario Cuomo's celebrated "society as family" speech to the Democratic convention in 1984 was, however eloquent, fundamentally misguided. We love and sacrifice for our families without regard to anyone's deserving. We owe them that because they are family. It is political madness to suggest that we owe everyone in society in the same measure. The image of society as family—perhaps the quintessential metaphor of feminized politics—destroys all sense of proportion, all sense of public/private distinction. That way lies moral unboundedness and political absurdity. (We might appropriately speak of society as family when, say, we are conducting a United Fund drive, but—again—charity and politics are not commensurable activities.)

As Michael Novak has recently reminded us, the first moral duty is to think clearly. Feminization characteristically emphasizes feeling and emotion over rationality and so sacrifices the intricate complexity and ambiguity of serious moral judgment to conventional moral earnestness. It tends to focus more on subjective motivation than actual outcomes and to suppose that the cultivation of correct attitudes constitutes moral behavior. It regularly mistakes words for things (as in carrying out its particular ideological agenda under the banner of "peace and justice," thus both sanctifying its own program and implicitly categorizing those who reject it as partisans of war and injustice), and it derives its political program from a view of the world not as it is but as, under the best of all conceivable circumstances, it might imaginably be.

THE answer to feminization is not amorality or ruthlessness; it is rather the recognition, as Niebuhr attempted to instruct us, that politics is the arena where power and conscience meet. Power unmediated by conscience eventuates in political tyranny, but the dream of a world where power is absent is no politics at all—it is fantasy. It seems that we need Niebuhr yet again.

He could remind the feminized Left of an essential moral dilemma of politics: that it is concerned more with the behavior of groups than of individuals, and that group behavior is inherently less subject to moral restraint than is that of individuals. Human behavior in any form is characterized by egoism and pursuit of self-interest, but individuals have a capacity for self-transcendence and self-criticism that allows some room at least for the biddings of conscience to moderate pure self-aggrandizement. Collective bodies exhibit little in the way of those moderating influences. It is notoriously difficult, to put it mildly, to appeal to the conscience of groups. One simply has to expect, Niebuhr concluded, a certain element of brutality in the behavior of collectivities. (An associated point: it is because the scale of modern life necessitates massive bureaucratization that requirements of coercion, competition, and impersonal rationality triumph over their traditional feminine counterparts. That is the nature of collective life.)

The special problems of group behavior aside, Niebuhr's acceptance of the doctrine of Original Sin (and one does not have to accept his theological baggage to concede his point) made him skeptical of any political program that would, like feminization, require faith in the goodness or infinite malleability of human nature. Niebuhr's Christian realism assumed that the imperfections of politics follow from the imperfections of human nature. Those who would improve the world—and Niebuhr always included himself in that company—must learn to work with those forces, not wish them out of existence or suppose that they might be obliterated. The realities of power and the pursuit of self-interest exist in the nature of things; the job of the statesman is not to overcome them but to manipulate them, so far as is possible, in the direction of humane ends.

It was Niebuhr's tough-minded realism that made him, in the end, so fervent a believer in constitutional democracy. We require a system of checks and balances, a pluralism of power, to thwart the potential for the demonic in human nature. One recalls his classic defense of democracy: it is man's capacity for justice that makes democracy possible, but it is his tendency to injustice that makes it necessary.

The application of Niebuhrian tests to feminized politics produces its most cautionary results in international affairs. Niebuhr understood that those who would establish a just international order must maintain the balance of power. The power of evil must be checked by the counterpower of (relative) good. For all his profound insistence that sin taints all human endeavors and thus all social orders, Niebuhr never supposed that recognition of the ambiguities of virtue should render democrats incapable of defending themselves against democracy's enemies.

The feminized reluctance concerning the use of power—which is today the single most distinctive characteristic of left-wing doctrine in foreign policy—hobbles the pursuit of justice and stable order in world politics. The instinctive hesitation of the Left to employ force or the threat of force in foreign affairs goes well beyond the prudential caution that a nuclear age requires; it amounts in practice to a denial that maintenance of the balance of power is any longer necessary to sustain a just peace. Although liberal politicians will not, for reasons of political survival, concede that that is the point to which they have come, their

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practice regularly belies their profession. They typically call for preparedness, but their policy prescriptions make it clear that theirs is a preparedness they are never prepared to put to the test.

IT MAY BE unfair to suggest disingenuousness in this or other aspects of the infiltration of feminization into left-wing politics. One suspects that most people on the Left are unaware of the degree to which they have been overtaken by feminized impulses. Feminization, after all, is not a fully-elaborated ideology; it is rather a set of political instincts, always subterraneously present on the Left, that has in recent years wielded more influence than is customary because of the debilitated condition of left-wing political thought. Its ideological resources almost exhausted, the Left has had only its emotional reflexes to fall back on. It may currently have little useful to contribute to the making of a public philosophy, but it retains its most admirable characteristic: its sense—speaking now only of domestic affairs—that society must never lose concern for those least able to make it on their own.

But concern for the marginalized, the victimized, and the oppressed—to adopt the Left's preferred vocabulary—lapses into sentimentality (and moral posturing) when it lacks a larger coherent framework into which that concern might fit. Expressions of compassion and solidarity with the disadvantaged become self-indulgent when they are not attached to credible programs by which those disadvantaged might rise to self-sufficiency and self-respect. (The same judgment applies to cries for "peace" that appear to assume that if only they are uttered urgently enough and with pure enough hearts they will somehow become self-fulfilling.) Feeling sorry for others and virtuous about oneself does not constitute an adequate politics. All people of good will, after all, desire the good for their neighbors and their society. The significant political question remains: how do we get there from here?

The feminized mode of politics—when it is not simply being exploited for ideological or partisan purposes—tells us eloquently of the Left's moral yearnings, but its present detachment from any usable social philosophy, its situation in fact of serving as substitute for such a philosophy, tells us even more eloquently of the Left's intellectual bankruptcy.

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Atonal Music and Its Limits

Neil M. Ribe

THE modern era in Western music began in 1911 with the publication of Arnold Schoenberg's *Theory of Harmony*, which declared that "tonality is no natural law of music, eternally valid." Schoenberg's announcement came as a shock to the vast majority of musicians who regarded tonality as the indispensable condition of music. Their distress was understandable: tonality had been the basis of Western music for more than three centuries, and had made possible a body of work of unparalleled depth and expressive power. Schoenberg's announcement was less surprising, however, to those who knew that tonality had in fact been gradually breaking down for fifty years. This process, initiated largely by Richard Wagner, had by 1911 reached a critical stage in which the very future of tonality appeared doubtful. It was Schoenberg who drew the radical but seemingly inevitable conclusion that tonality itself was no longer valid, and that an entirely new musical system was needed to replace it.

Tonality may be defined as a musical idiom in which all pitches are organized in relation to a given central pitch, or "tonal center." Music which lacks such a center is commonly called "atonal." Schoenberg's greatest contribution to Western music was to provide a rigorous theoretical basis for atonality by inventing the so-called "twelve-tone" method.*

The importance of Schoenberg's achievement is hard to exaggerate. The contemporary composer and theorist George Perle, for example, claims that the development of atonality by Schoenberg and his students "probably represents the most far-reaching and thoroughgoing revolution the history of music has known since the beginnings of polyphony." Schoenberg himself clearly recognized the significance of his method, of which he said: "I have made a discovery that will assure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years."

Yet while composers of all nationalities have been influenced by Schoenberg's method, and the basic principles of atonal composition he introduced are still being employed today, the method has met with hardly any appreciation or acceptance from the public at large. Concert audiences continue to prefer the music of the past, and seem uninterested in even a limited exposure to atonal music. As a consequence, only a handful of atonal works are performed by our major musical organizations, which rely largely on the repertoire of earlier centuries to keep their audiences satisfied. Active appreciation of atonal music has thus been confined to a relatively few conductors and performers—and, of course, its composers.

Within the past few years, however, many composers have seemingly undergone a change of heart, and have begun to incorporate elements of traditional tonality in their works. The new trend was certified by the inauguration in 1983 of the New York Philharmonic's "Horizons" summer festival, whose subtitle, "A New Romanticism?," was meant to drawn attention to a return to tonality on the part of several of the composers represented. Whatever the merits of the music itself, the very fact that the festival took place testifies to the growing number of composers dissatisfied with the austerities of atonality and searching for a more accessible musical style. As for the decidedly unenthusiastic critical response to the festival, this may have been an indication of just how confused much of that searching remains.

Indeed, serious music today is unsure of itself as it has not been since the early years of the 20th century. Today, moreover, the central issue is the same as it was then: what is the meaning of tonality? Has tonality been exhausted beyond recall, or does it remain a valid means of musical expression?

2

PROPERLY to understand the meaning of tonality we must first consider a more fundamental question: what are the sources of musical expression?

Since Plato and Aristotle, Western thinkers have recognized that music is unique among the

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* Although Schoenberg disapproved of the term "atonal" and preferred to call his music "pantonal," I follow what has come to be the standard usage.

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arts in its ability to express human character and emotion. We can begin to understand why this should be so by considering one of the simplest of all musical phenomena: the octave.

The interval of the octave is produced by vibrating strings whose lengths are in the ratio 2:1, a discovery usually attributed to Pythagoras. The mathematical ratio, however, tells us nothing about how the octave sounds. In fact, the sound of an octave is not easy to describe: about the best one can do is to say that the notes of an octave sound the same even though they are different. The sound is so familiar that we seldom pause to reflect on how strange it is that the octave exists at all. For if every musical pitch has a different vibrational frequency, as modern physics tells us, we should expect different pitches to sound completely different. Yet we know from experience that this is not so, and the mathematical conception of pitch must therefore be incomplete.

This rather simple line of reasoning leads us to an important conclusion: music cannot be reduced to mathematics. That is not to deny that music has a mathematical aspect, one which has rightly fascinated musicians and philosophers since ancient times. But it should serve to remind us that the ear hears things that mathematics alone cannot explain.

Why, then, is the octave so important? Because it is the fundamental "unit" in terms of which our sense of hearing measures the quality—the degree of tension or dissonance—of all other intervals. The octave is the least dissonant interval because it exhibits the least possible degree of tension between nonidentical notes (this is in fact what it means to say that the notes of the octave sound the same). Indeed, it is with reference to this state of minimal tension that our sense of hearing implicitly judges the qualities of all other intervals. The octave, by providing the standard against which we perceive qualitative differences in musical sound, may thus be said to be the natural measure of consonance and dissonance.

The concept of a "natural measure" becomes clearer when we recognize that it is practically unique to music. Time, for example, has no natural measure: minutes or millennia are equally good units, and the choice between them is solely a matter of convenience. The same is true of distance. Another way of saying this is that time and distance are pure continua, without any intrinsic structure. A given interval of time or distance may be longer or shorter than another, but qualitatively the two are the same. Musical pitch, by contrast, is a *structured* continuum in which the existence of a preeminent interval (the octave) makes qualitative differences possible.

If the octave is the least dissonant musical interval, an obvious question arises: can the other musical intervals be ranked in order of increasing dissonance?

Some insight into this question is provided by the phenomenon of the overtone series. A note played on any musical instrument actually contains both a dominant pitch (the "fundamental") and a series of higher pitches or "overtones" whose frequencies are simple integer multiples of the fundamental frequency. The frequency of the first overtone is twice that of the fundamental; the frequency of the second overtone, three times; and so on. Although these overtones are generally much weaker than the fundamental, their presence in varying proportions is what distinguishes the tone qualities of different musical instruments. The intervals between consecutive notes in the overtone series are defined by the simple integer frequency ratios 2:1, 3:2, 4:3, and so on. The first four intervals in this series are: the octave; the perfect fifth; the perfect fourth; and the major third.

It is tempting to assert that the overtone series is just the hierarchy of dissonance we are looking for. The perfect fifth would then be the least dissonant interval after the octave, followed by the perfect fourth, and so on. We must be careful, however, not to confuse mathematical entities (integer frequency ratios) with qualitative sensations (degrees of dissonance). Whether or not there is a correlation between the two can only be decided on the basis of experience and musical practice.

Still, a survey of world musical traditions suggests that the correlation is a rather strong one. First of all, the octave is universally recognized as the most basic interval, as is indicated by the fact that the most fundamental of all music structures —the scale—is founded upon it. The perfect fifth and the perfect fourth clearly rank next. As the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* puts it, ". . . from the point of view of musical composition of all eras, these two intervals must be regarded as consonances second only to the unison and the octave."

The importance of the fifth and the fourth is demonstrated, for example, by the ubiquity of the tonal pentatonic (five-note) scale, which occurs in virtually every musical culture (this scale corresponds to the black keys on the piano). As the ancient Chinese recognized, the notes of this scale are obtained by ascending in fifths (or descending in fourths) from a given pitch.

Secondly, the music of many cultures (such as ancient Greek, Arabic, and Persian) is based on tetrachords, or four-note divisions of the perfect fourth. The function of the perfect fourth in tetrachordal music is to serve as a consonant frame of reference for the complex melody woven around it.

Thirdly, the most common form of primitive polyphony is "parallel organum," in which the voices move in parallel fifths or fourths. In the more complex types of organum developed in

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medieval Europe, the octave, fifth, and fourth remained the only acceptable intervals for use at the beginning of a musical piece and in cadences.

Perhaps the clearest illustration of the status of the fifth and the fourth is the common use of these intervals as "drone" accompaniments to a complex melody. This type of drone is familiar to Western listeners from bagpipe music; it also figures prominently in the music of India, where the melody or *raga* is accompanied by a drone of a perfect fifth (less commonly a fourth). In general, a drone must be a relatively consonant interval to assure that it will not interfere with the melody. The common use of fifths and fourths as drones shows that these intervals occupy an intermediate position between the consonant octave (or unison) and the more dissonant intervals which occur higher in the overtone series.

Why is the hierarchical nature of consonance and dissonance so significant? Perhaps most importantly, it makes possible the phenomenon of "tonal motion," one of the central expressive characteristics of music. Even the simplest melody conveys the sense that the notes are in motion, that the music is "going somewhere." Such motion is not merely change of pitch, but rather the variation of musical tension which arises from the intrinsic dissonances of the successive intervals. Tonal motion is therefore directed: it is always felt as motion toward or away from some state of tension or relaxation. Moreover, the phenomenon of tonal motion appears at all levels of musical practice.

Perhaps the simplest example is the musical scale, whose characteristic motion is a departure from the tonic note followed by a return to the same note an octave higher or lower. Melody exhibits more complex patterns of motion. Harmony provides even richer resources, and makes possible such powerful and familiar vehicles of tonal motion as the tonic/dominant polarity of Western music.

The concept of tonal motion leads us to the very source of musical expression: the resemblance of musical motion to human action. Like musical motion, human action is inherently directed: it proceeds through alternations of desire and satisfaction, striving and fulfillment, tension and release. Music and human action thus have the same forms and are characterized by the same polarities. This, I would suggest, is what Aristotle meant when he said (in Book VIII of the *Politics*) that music "imitates" human character. As he observes elsewhere, "there seems to be in us a certain affinity for musical modes and rhythms, which leads some philosophers to say that the soul is a tuning. . . ." This affinity accounts in turn for music's extraordinary expressive power, and justifies the critic Walter Pater's famous dictum that "all art constantly aspires toward the condition of music."

3.

Now let us return to Arnold Schoenberg and the significance of his renunciation of tonality. Probably the best introduction to this subject is Schoenberg's 1941 lecture, "Composition with Twelve Tones." Here Schoenberg discusses the basic principle of atonality, which he called the "emancipation of the dissonance":

> What distinguishes dissonances from consonances is not a greater or lesser degree of beauty, but a greater or lesser degree of *comprehensibility*. In my *Theory of Harmony* I presented the theory that dissonant tones appear later among the overtones, for which reason the ear is less intimately acquainted with them. This phenomenon does not justify such sharply contradictory terms as concord and discord. Closer acquaintance with the more remote consonances—the dissonances, that is—gradually eliminated the difficulty of comprehension. . . .
>
> The term *emancipation* of the dissonance refers to its comprehensibility, which is considered equivalent to the comprehensibility of the consonance. A style based on this premise treats dissonances like consonances and renounces a tonal center. . . .

Schoenberg's first atonal pieces, composed after 1908, were written in a style which is commonly called "free" atonality. The best-known of these works are the monodrama *Erwartung* ("Expectation," 1909) and the cycle *Pierrot Lunaire* ("Moonstruck Pierrot") for reciter and chamber orchestra (1912).

By Schoenberg's admission, free atonality proved most suitable for very short and extremely expressive works, and could not provide a substitute for the organizational principles of tonality. Schoenberg describes how he eventually found a satisfactory solution to this problem:

> After many unsuccessful attempts during a period of approximately twelve years, I laid the foundation for a new procedure in musical construction which seemed fitted to replace those structural differentiations provided formerly by total harmonies.
>
> I called this procedure "Method of Composing with Twelve Tones Which are Related only with One Another."
>
> This method consists primarily of the constant and exclusive use of a set of twelve different tones. This means, of course, that no tone is repeated within the set and that it uses all twelve tones of the chromatic scale, though in a different order. . . . [The basic set] functions in the manner of a motive. This explains why such a basic set must be invented anew for every piece. It has to be the first creative thought.

Beginning with the waltz from *Five Piano Pieces* (1923), Schoenberg used the twelve-tone method for a body of work encompassing nearly

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every major musical genre, including the *Variations for Orchestra* (1928), the opera *Moses and Aaron* (1930-32), concertos for violin (1936) and piano (1942), and numerous chamber works. The twelve-tone method was further applied by Schoenberg's students Anton Webern and Alban Berg, and the three are often referred to collectively as the "second Viennese school."

The greatness of Schoenberg's achievement is beyond question, and is now properly appreciated by most knowledgeable musicians. The meaning of that achievement, however, is still far from clear. Musicians have generally been reluctant critically to examine the conceptual foundations of atonality, perhaps for fear of lending support to its vocal and often irrational opponents. Yet Schoenberg's method in fact demands such an investigation, if only because it offers probably the first example in history of "theoretical" music: instead of rationalizing an existing practice which had developed incrementally over time, the theory precedes the practice and determines it.

Consider, then, the basic tenet of the twelve-tone method: "emancipation of the dissonance." Schoenberg's explanation of this principle, quoted above, begins by acknowledging the traditional view that the "dissonant" tones or intervals are those which occur later in the overtone series. Concord and discord are therefore not contradictory terms, but differ only in degree. At this point, however, Schoenberg departs radically from the traditional view, claiming that the distinction between consonance and dissonance is due solely to lack of exposure, and disappears upon "closer acquaintance" with the more remote intervals. From this he concludes that it is appropriate to ignore the distinction entirely by "treat[ing] dissonances like consonances and renounc[ing] a tonal center."

Schoenberg's explanation clearly reveals his root assumption that the distinction between consonance and dissonance is conventional and therefore arbitrary. But this view is incorrect. The octave, we have seen, is the standard by which we measure the qualities of musical intervals, their relative consonance or dissonance. If the octave is natural, so too are consonance and dissonance. To attempt to overcome this distinction is rather like trying to stop seeing the world in color.

It is striking that Schoenberg provides no evidence whatsoever for his view that consonance and dissonance are interchangeable, but merely asserts it as an axiom of his method. And it is the more striking that Schoenberg's practice in this matter is not consistent with his principles. The twelve-tone method includes the principle of octave equivalence, whereby tones an octave apart are regarded as the same note. Schoenberg's method thus implicitly acknowledges—and indeed draws its coherence from—the special natural status of the octave. Schoenberg, however, apparently failed to see the necessary consequences of this status, and his decision to treat all other intervals interchangeably introduced a deep inconsistency into his method.

THE fact that there are conceptual difficulties inherent in the twelve-tone method does not mean that it has no musical value. For one thing, the method has produced a body of music of extraordinary density and structural complexity which has proved eminently satisfying to many composers and performers. More importantly, atonality has opened up new possibilities for musical expression by extending the range of human actions that music can imitate. Schoenberg himself regarded this as his major achievement. Speaking of his work in 1949, he said: "Forty years have since proved that the psychological basis of all these changes was correct. Music without a constant reference to a tonic was comprehensible, could produce characters and moods, could provoke emotions, and was not devoid of gaiety or humor."

Schoenberg did not specify the particular characters, moods, and emotions he had in mind. Like all musical idioms, however, atonality is better suited to express some characters than others. The expressive qualities of a musical style are notoriously difficult to describe, but one useful indication is the nature of the poems or other literary texts a composer chooses to set. An examination of the texts chosen by Schoenberg and his students suggests that atonality is particularly well suited to imitating actions of an extreme or abnormal character.

Erwartung, for example, is about a woman who wanders through a forest at night in search of her lover and comes upon his murdered body; Schoenberg's musical setting was aptly described by the philosopher Theodor Adorno as a "seismic registration of traumatic shocks." The macabre and often horrifying character of *Pierrot Lunaire* is sufficiently indicated by the titles of such poems of the cycle as "Grave Robbery," "Gallows Song," and "Beheading." Alban Berg's early opera *Wozzeck* (1925) is the tale of a persecuted soldier who murders his unfaithful mistress and then drowns himself. Berg's twelve-tone opera *Lulu* (1937) tells the story of a beautiful woman's "progress" from an object of desire to a convicted murderess to a prostitute who meets her death at the hands of Jack the Ripper.

Of course, not all the texts set by Schoenberg and his students are as dark as these, but the prominence of such texts in atonal music is nevertheless remarkable. It is fair to say, indeed, that subjects like those of *Erwartung* or *Lulu* would never have been chosen by composers before the 20th century. Their liberal appropriation by atonal composers strongly suggests that atonality is most comfortably at home in a spiritual territory where extremes—not to say depths—of human action and feeling are explored.

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Is atonal music also capable of successfully expressing the wider range of normal human action and emotion? The experience of nearly eighty years suggests that the answer is no. In spite of Schoenberg's claim that atonal music is "not devoid of gaiety or humor," a convincing atonal comic opera has yet to be written, and subjects of a noble or tragic character have not fared much better; most atonal composers, like the rest of us, find it difficult to imagine an atonal *Marriage of Figaro* or *Romeo and Juliet*.

IN SPITE of the obvious expressive limitations of atonality, Schoenberg insisted throughout his life that atonal music would eventually be accepted by concert audiences. Needless to say, Schoenberg's hope is unlikely to be fulfilled. The reason is simple: atonality is not very well suited to expressing things traditionally considered "beautiful." In fact, the word beauty almost never occurs in discussions of atonal music, even among its most avid partisans. This is not really surprising, for Schoenberg himself spoke of being "cured of the delusion that the artist's aim is to create beauty." One may, of course, assert that being cured of such delusions is just what audiences deserve; this was the position of Theodor Adorno, who wrote that "the dissonances which horrify them testify to their own condition." Such an attitude, however, does scant justice to the traditions of Western music and the experience of those who know it well.

Adorno did speak truly when he characterized atonality as a "musical domination of nature." What he meant by this was that atonality replaces the traditional, "natural" structures of music with a set of quantitative laws that allows musical sound to be controlled and manipulated mathematically. This new orientation is evident in the twelve-tone method itself, which regards the tones and intervals of the basic set as functionally equivalent elements differing from each other only quantitatively. But the truth of Adorno's remark has been demonstrated most clearly by the development of musical "serialism" in the decades following World War II.

Serialism generalizes the principles of the twelve-tone method by taking pitch as only one of the several musical "parameters," including duration, instrumentation, dynamics, and so forth. Each parameter can assume any one of a "set" of discrete values, and musical composition is then regarded as the progressive transformation and permutation of these sets by means of mathematical operations. Given this complete mathematization of musical practice, it is not surprising that serialism has effectively renounced music's traditional goal of representing human action and emotion.

Adorno's "musical domination of nature" is reminiscent of Descartes's famous statement that the purpose of modern science is the "mastery and possession of nature." In fact, the advent of serialism means nothing less than the triumph of the Cartesian perspective in music. Like Cartesian science, serialism replaces traditional conceptions based on experience and common sense with mathematical abstractions. Each relies on the rigorous application of a quantitative method to assure precise control of its "material." Most importantly, neither modern science nor musical serialism has much use for human subjectivity.

It has often been remarked that modern science effectively banishes man from nature by denying objective status to his most fundamental concerns and desires. With remarkable consistency, the same can be said of much modern music. Until recently, music afforded one of the few secure refuges from the expanding dominion of scientific abstraction, but it hardly serves this purpose any longer. The price we have paid for making music "scientific" is the demise of musical expression in our time.

4.

IF ATONALITY and serialism do not provide adequate substitutes for tonality, does it necessarily follow that tonality remains a valid means of expression for the creative composer? Perhaps Schoenberg and his students were correct on the main point and tonality did die in 1911, never to rise again. Eighty years later, however, we may be forgiven for viewing this contention with some skepticism.

It is surely undeniable that in 1911 tonality had been stretched to the breaking point in the works of Schoenberg, Berg, Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, and Claude Debussy, leading Schoenberg to conclude that the demise of tonality was a historical necessity. Note, however, that all but one of the composers just named are German or Austrian. Schoenberg's assumption is obvious: Austro-German music is supreme, and therefore its fate will define "historical necessity." It was thus hardly accidental that Schoenberg said, "I have made a discovery that will assure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years."

The presumption of Schoenberg's attitude is extraordinary, and it is surprising that so few commentators have taken issue with it. To refute it definitively one need only list the large number of composers who continued to write tonal music after Schoenberg's announcement of its demise. A partial enumeration would include Paul Hindemith and Carl Orff in Germany itself, Maurice Ravel and Francis Poulenc in France, Zoltán Kodály in Hungary, Bohuslav Martinů in Czechoslovakia, Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich in Russia, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Benjamin Britten in England, Manuel de Falla in Spain, Samuel Barber and Roy Harris in the United States. Moreover, the work of Béla Bartók

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and Igor Stravinsky managed to be highly innovative while remaining within a recognizably tonal context (Stravinsky's later atonal pieces excepted). As this list shows, tonality still provides a rich fund of resources for original musical expression.

Nevertheless, it would be rash to conclude from all this that Western tonality is the "natural" language of music, as has sometimes been claimed. Western tonality is but one musical system among many, and its unqualified superiority to all others is by no means obvious. What I have tried to argue here is the broader point that tonality itself, as a system which acknowledges hierarchy in the realm of musical sound, is natural. In this sense, the music of all cultures and historical periods is tonal, with one salient exception: our own today. In its explicit denial of nature, this exception merely proves the rule that tonality is the natural language of music.

If tonality is natural, are some tonalities more natural than others? The question is dangerous, because no musical system is natural without qualification. Each was developed by a particular people at a particular time, and for a different purpose. In short, all musical systems are conventional. Nature provides the elements that make musical expression possible; convention shapes these elements into expresssive musical works. The paradoxical relationship between nature and convention in all human affairs is captured by Aristotle's description of the city-state in the *Politics*: it is natural, yet "he who invented it was the greatest of benefactors." The same is true of music.

Aristotle's remark also implies, however, that we are free to choose our conventions well or badly, with a greater or lesser degree of understanding. Western tonality owes its greatness to a set of conventions which allowed an unprecedented synthesis of expressive richness and formal control, of what Nietzsche called "enthusiasm" and "self-possession." The tragedy of Schoenberg's attempt to reestablish this synthesis was that the conventions he chose violated the constraints which nature had provided.

It remains to be seen whether the future of Western music can equal the achievements of its past. The essence of the musical art, however, will remain what it has always been: to discover those conventions which most fully realize the natural expressive possibilities of tone.

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On Becoming a Jew

Roger Owen

ONE morning in the summer of 1978, and in the manner prescribed by Jewish law, I became a Jew. Such an event is something one does not easily forget, and in my case the occasion was made especially memorable by its setting and circumstances.

My conversion took place in New York during my first visit to the United States. The final ceremony was performed somewhere in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn, in a neighborhood with an evidently large population of Orthodox Jews—not the kind of district which British visitors normally have cause to seek out. And because, among other formalities required by Jewish law, it included a ritual immersion, that ceremony was held in the local *mikveh* or ritual bathhouse, which was also a new and strange environment for me to find myself in. Finally, some of the things which happened there that morning, though no doubt routine occurrences to the three rabbis who supervised my conversion, struck me at the time as being extraordinary and mystifying.

Nine years later, however, it is not only the exotic or alien nature of that experience which makes it stay in my mind. I was to discover that the actual process of my conversion had engaged my interest and also aroused my feelings in ways which beforehand I would not have thought possible.

The project, I have to say, was one about which I had felt not the slightest tremor of religious or transcendental sentiment. Nor did it at any stage engender such emotions. I had undertaken it with reluctance, only to meet the needs of my future wife's parents, who had been literally sickened at the prospect of her marrying a non-Jew. I approached the matter, therefore, with diffidence and embarrassment—indeed with some sense, from my own point of view, of its absurdity. Yet, to my surprise, the nature of the experience itself was such that these feelings were changed into interest and respect—into admiration for the three rabbis, and what they stood for. It would be overdoing things to say that I came to mock, and stayed to pray. But in the days that followed my conversion—once I had found time to make sense of the multiplicity of impressions the event had made on me—I realized that it had contained meanings and expressed truths which I had neither expected nor sought from it. In a dim, approximate, and unspiritual way, it had acquired a kind of authenticity.

AT HOME in England it seemed that a conversion to Judaism was certain to be a wearying and lengthy process, so I had decided to look elsewhere. Because of my misgivings about the propriety of what I was doing, I wanted to get the business over with quickly. The thought of being circumcised did not worry me too much, and in the event, that burden was to incommode me for less than two weeks. What I most wished to avoid was being obliged to sustain for a lengthy period an appearance of moral or religious commitment. Although the borough of Brooklyn seemed an unlikely place to find the kind of conversion I was looking for, I was advised that there the whole matter could be dispatched with American efficiency, as it were—quickly and without fuss. And so it was. After I had been in New York for only two weeks, the proceedings had already reached their final stage. Two successful meetings with the head of the *Beth Din*, the Rabbinical Court, which was to perform the conversion, were behind me.

On the first of these the head of the *Beth Din* had been discouraging, and had made some effort to dissuade me from the course of action on which I had embarked. I interpreted this, however, as a "conventional" effort on his part, especially as we concluded our meeting by making arrangements for a second meeting within a few days. (Later I was to discover that an effort at dissuasion is a virtual requirement of the conversion procedure, in order to test, however briefly, the postulant's determination.) At this second meeting I was examined courteously on various aspects of Jewish law and practice about which (as I shall describe later) I had informed myself. These trials were

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now behind me. Now all that remained were the concluding formalities.

My conversion was accomplished therefore with a degree of speed which was certainly, as such things go, unusual, and which some people may even judge indecent. For all that, there was nothing illicit about it. The Rabbinical Court I dealt with was an Orthodox one. If it moved quickly, it did so, I subsequently learned, with the warrant of the ancient rabbis, who directed in the Talmud that a conversion take place as expeditiously as possible. Moreover, the Rabbinical Court appeared to perform its duties punctiliously, and the validity of my conversion (exactingly tested since then) has never been questioned.

In a way the very speed of the act seems to me in retrospect to have been a necessary ingredient of its style, contributing to the powerful impact it made on me. The whole transaction, including its formal procedures, and the manner and spirit in which these were handled, was brisk and businesslike; its outward forms neatly and economically embodied the meanings I chose to draw from it. These I took to include certain perceptions about the world and about human behavior, which, in spite of their antiquity, I as a proselyte was to find novel and refreshing. They were unmistakably present that morning in the *mikveh*, in those events which I found—at the time—so bewildering.

It was in, of all places, Jerusalem that my journey to the *mikveh* in Brooklyn began. I was in Israel at the time working on a series of television films for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on the origins and history of the Arab-Israeli dispute, a project I had long nursed. My future wife was back in London, where she then worked as an emissary of the Jewish Agency. Her parents, a fairly traditional couple in their early seventies, had emigrated to Palestine in 1933 from Hungary. They had been told something of our relationship and knew by now of our intention to marry.

One day my future wife's brother came to the hotel where I was staying. We sat in its courtyard drinking coffee. It was obvious that he too was in the role of emissary. His parents, I was told, liked me. That I was divorced and the father of teen-age daughters constituted no problem. Nor did they make it a condition of their approval that I convert. But they were very unhappy about the situation. As I knew, they were both in the frailest of health, and the sleeplessness and anxiety they were currently enduring were the cause of great concern to everybody. Could, therefore, the question of a conversion at least be discussed? He used the word "hypothetically," as if to introduce a note of rationality into proceedings where that quality was not likely to prevail.

I went through the motions of argument. The children—were there to be any—would be Jewish anyway, as the offspring of a Jewish mother. We intended to live in Israel where a Jewish education would be guaranteed. How, anyway, could I promise to keep the Jewish obligations or *mitzvot* when my future wife (or he for that matter) was far from observant herself? Jewishness, I argued, was a condition, and not just a religion, one from which I was excluded by birth and national feeling. A conversion would imply beliefs which I did not hold. It would be a dishonest procedure, as his parents knew, without meaning to me, and in consequence, I felt it ought therefore to be of no significance to them. It would not change the real world.

My future brother-in-law ignored all this. He looked at me steadily. "Do it," he said with great vehemence and urgency. "Just do it." And then he added, in a tone of high moral seriousness as though his proposition would be self-evident to all good men, "*You don't have to believe it.*" This remark would not, I imagine, meet with rabbinical approval, but it seems to me now that there was something very Jewish about it. He was asking me to perform a good deed, something which in its way could be construed as a *mitzvah*. Judaism, as far as I know, urges but does not demand that people *feel* good about doing good.

A week later, back in London, my future wife and I made an appointment with a Liberal (what in America is called Reform) rabbi in the hope that something would be on offer in that quarter. Although her parents were religiously observant, any gesture on my part would have pleased them. Had I not read somewhere that on the progressive edges of Judaism there were rabbis who described themselves as "deists" or "agnostics"? I had found that difficult to understand, but it had given me heart. The word "Liberal," however, had misled me.

The rabbi's study was tastefully furnished, very different from the Brooklyn rabbi's dining room where I was to be questioned six months later. There, I remember, the wallpaper took the form of a large, golden brown photo blow-up of a sylvan scene in autumn. The walls of this room, however, were lined with books, many of a secular kind. This rabbi was bareheaded. He got up from his desk to greet us, switching off, as he did so, a record player on which, I recall, the music of the Greek composer Theodorakis was being played. My hopes—raised by this ambience—were soon in decline.

A conversion was possible, but I would be expected to attend classes on Judaism for a year, and to take part in "discussions." So too would my intended wife, in order to acquaint herself with the principles of Liberal Judaism. Circumcision was not excluded. Finally, and in due course, we would both be expected to join the rabbi's congregation and take an active part in its life.

My future wife's *amour-propre* was offended

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by the reception given to us. She was a Jew, a literate and well-informed one. She couldn't see what the discussions could do for her. Nor was I at all willing to go through all this. My motives, far from being disguised, had, with my future wife present, been openly on display. Yet I was being asked to make a sustained show of "sincere" commitment, not merely for a year, but for the indefinite future. Gloomily (and perhaps unfairly) I imagined myself attending seminars on "Jewish Values" or "Judaism and Feminism." With circumcision as well, these were formidable demands.

I HAD heard about the possibility of being converted in Brooklyn from a cool young Londoner. He himself had not long before returned from his own conversion there and was already married to the Jewish girl (like my own future wife an Israeli) whose family had insisted on it. "It's completely kosher," he had assured me cheerfully. A letter of recommendation from an Israeli rabbi acquainted with the family had been called for, and this we knew could be arranged in our case too. The young man told me of the kind of questions I would be asked by the head of the *Beth Din*. He wished me luck, lent me some books which he had found useful, and gave us the address to write to.

Although all this information proved to be accurate, the tone of his remarks was misleadingly blithe, as though the experience I was to share with him were no more exacting than, say, a visit to the dentist. As I have already indicated, it was to be far more perturbing and much more interesting than this. Still, we dutifully followed the procedure he had outlined. Conveniently for us, my future wife's brother was just then posted to New York on a two-year stint of Israeli government business. There he acted as my agent, arranging—albeit in the teeth of much resistance—the first appointment on my behalf with the head of the *Beth Din* for a few months later. No promises were made, but by indirect means we were able to infer or at least hope that if I presented myself at the right time and exhibited some familiarity with Jewish religious law, a conversion would be likely to take place.

Tutored by my future wife, I began a modest course of study. We read the *Shulhan Arukh*, Joseph Caro's 16th-century codification of Jewish law. I learned by heart a number of prayers and she explained the significance of the Jewish festivals. We dipped into Maimonides. As Passover was due, I was taken through the *Haggadah*, and I followed the first of the nine seders I have since attended with some understanding and interest. I was charmed by the way it involved children, and moved by the contemporary parallels which lay in its pages, and which, I supposed, had always done so. I realized too—to qualify the remarks I shall be making below about the appearance of the *mikveh*—that for Jews it is in domestic matters that religious and aesthetic feeling come together; for example, in the seder, or in the lighting of the Sabbath candles.

Throughout this period, I was still immersed professionally, through the series of films I was making, in the early and nominally secular history of Zionism, and my full-time work was given an added dimension by my elementary explorations of Judaism. To save time in New York I arranged to be circumcised in London, discovering, curiously enough, that it could be done by the National Health Service, though in this, as in more crucial matters, there would be an unconscionable delay in securing a bed. So I put myself privately into the hands of a Jewish surgeon whose credentials to perform the circumcision did not, in the event, go down well in Flatbush. I spent one night in a plush little hospital reading Chaim Weizmann's autobiography and speculating about the condition of my bandaged penis. Shortly afterward we flew to New York. Two weeks later I went to keep the appointment arranged for me at that *mikveh*.

On the morning concerned, I made my way to Flatbush by subway. I carried a briefcase which contained the accouterments required for the ceremony. These included a blue velvet *yarmulke* with silver trimmings, perhaps a shade frivolous, I felt, for so solemn an occasion. I also took with me a set of phylacteries, or *tefillin*, the ritual objects containing passages from Scripture with which observant Jews bind the left arm and head during prayer. These items were the property of my wife's nephew who had just had his bar mitzvah. The briefcase was my own, though it bore the letters "BBC" stamped over its lock.

At that point I had worked for the BBC in London for nearly twenty years, most of them as a producer and writer of educational and documentary films. I was then forty-eight years old. As I walked through the unfamiliar streets from the subway station it occurred to me that my film work had included many sequences of the kind in which I myself was now to be the principal actor. Not actually a conversion to Judaism, but other and similar rites of passage—a child's first day at school, a Hindu wedding. Here, the voice of my profession told me, was the material for an example of that genre. The sense, induced by this thought, that I was observing myself from the outside was to add to the feeling of unreality I experienced in the episode which followed.

I had never seen the inside of a *mikveh* before (nor for that matter have I done so since) and so had little idea of what I would find there. This one was a small, single-story building of rather worn appearance. Naively, knowing of its religious purpose, I had half-expected to see there some signs or artifacts of an elevated or pious character—perhaps a menorah or some volumes of the Talmud. Inside, however, its anteroom was devoid of ornament. On its otherwise bare walls

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there was only a large notice which said "MIKVEH, $5—SPECIAL $10."

In front of the notice was a row of massive and aging hair dryers. I was early, so I sat down to wait on a bench next to these silent machines. Judaism, I told myself, as I waited nervously for the three rabbis to arrive, pays little attention to those aesthetic concerns which, especially on solemn occasions, inform the practice of some more "spiritual" religions. I knew this in theory; now this utterly functional setting brought the idea home to me. A *mikveh* is a place used routinely by observant Jews—for example, by women for their monthly acts of cleansing and purification; hence the hair dryers. This was indeed the place where I would be pronounced a Jew. The appearance of the *mikveh*, however, matched the events that followed, some of which were indeed prosaic in character.

ALL three rabbis of the court or *Beth Din* arrived together. The head of the *Beth Din*, whom I had already met twice, greeted me. One of his colleagues was a large untidy-looking man with glasses—quite old; the other was a younger fellow much brisker in manner and appearance. The rabbis set about their business without delay. The younger one was a *mohel*, someone authorized to perform circumcisions. The circumcision I had undergone in England a couple of weeks earlier had not, it seemed, been done in point of Jewish law to the rabbis' satisfaction. Another symbolic circumcision had therefore been deemed necessary: the drawing out of a small amount of blood from the tip of my penis. The door of the *mikveh* was locked and, without ceremony, I was told to lie down on the very bench where I had been sitting, and to open my trousers. Amid some praying a small needle was inserted humanely, almost imperceptibly, into the correct place. All three rabbis watched this operation closely. Suddenly an animated scene broke out.

The elderly rabbi with the glasses was not sure that blood had been drawn. "It's there," said the *mohel* impatiently, "look, it's there." The bespectacled rabbi examined the end of the needle again, but shook his head, still unsure. The *mohel* raised his voice. "Gimme some Kleenex," he demanded. He found some and rubbed the needle against it. He then moved over, taking the other two rabbis with him, to a position beneath an electric light bulb. Lying in some discomfort on the narrow bench, my pants still undone, I craned my neck up and sideways at the three rabbis as they all peered closely at the piece of Kleenex. For a moment the three intent faces, hats pushed back, were framed together sharply against the light. "I see it," said the one with the glasses, "I see it."

I was then taken—almost in escort—to the changing rooms where I was given a loose white gown of some linen-like material. Clad only in this, I made my way to a small tiled bath, and under the direction of the rabbis descended its steps and immersed myself three times in its waters. The rabbis stood in front of me on the side of the bath looking down at my actions with close interest. As my head rose out of the water for the third time, I could see from their gestures that a discussion had broken out, though from its vehemence, and in those acoustics, it sounded a bit like a fight. I looked up at them, fearful that something had gone badly wrong, and that my enterprise was in trouble even at this late stage.

"You touched the side," one of them at last explained brusquely. "We think you touched the side the last time, so you'll have to do it again." I did it again, this time satisfactorily. And then, or perhaps it was earlier (for the chronology of some of these events is now confused and dreamlike), I stood with the waters of the *mikveh* up to my middle, and repeated in Hebrew after the presiding rabbi some of the prayers which my future wife had taught me by heart in the preceding weeks.

I was told to get dressed. I scrambled into my clothes. My hands were trembling. There was a mirror in the changing room and I looked at myself briefly with disbelief. I hurried back past the hair dryers and the large notice to where the rabbis were waiting. I opened my briefcase. A prayer shawl was placed on my shoulders, and somebody put the blue velvet *yarmulke* on my head. I saw that its style was a matter of indifference to them; it served. My head and left arm were now bound with phylacteries.

"You never laid *tefillin* before?" asked the old one incredulously, as he watched my nervous and muddled efforts to put them on in the prescribed manner. I had practiced several times the night before, but I lied (gratuitously, I am sure), mumbling something sanctimonious about not being sure that I had been entitled to do so—I was afraid of being exposed as the impostor I felt myself to be. Help was provided. The proceedings continued with more prayers, which I repeated adequately, conscious, though, of my English accent and again of the deep improbability of my appearance and situation. Suddenly I found myself being congratulated. It was all over.

But not quite. There was a small additional scene, or coda. In the haste and social awkwardness of my departure, I realized as I was leaving that I had forgotten to take the phylacteries. Reluctantly, I returned to get them. The rabbis were chatting together as they too packed up to go.

"Hey, you forgot your *tefillin*," said the old one with the glasses, whose manner I had found attractive in spite of the earlier difficulty he had caused; there had been something straight and ingenuous about him. He was now holding the soft bag embossed with the Star of David, in

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which the *tefillin* were contained. Nor, I realized, would he let it go.

"But do you know what you did? You know? You realize what you did?"

I shook my head, smiling foolishly, eager to get away again. He too smiled, broadly and with warmth.

"You did," he said, "exactly what the children of Israel did when they were given the Torah. That's what you did. You did what they did."

He kept me waiting a second or two before explaining.

"You fled," he said. "That's what you did, you fled, just like the children of Israel, you FLED!"

Still smiling, he handed over the *tefillin*, and I fled again. I had done something pertinent, but his approbation had embarrassed me, producing a tinge of guilt.

I stepped out into the sunny Brooklyn street. In my pocket was the certificate which authenticated my new status; on my still damp head was the borrowed *yarmulke* which bore witness to it. A block away from the *mikveh*, I removed the *yarmulke*, stuffing it along with the phylacteries into my briefcase. The letters "BBC" seemed like a comment, though one of obscure intent, as bewildering as much else that morning. Straightening up, I crossed the road to the spot where I had arranged to meet my future wife. She was relieved that my ordeal was over, and pleased with me for doing what I had done—pleased not only for her parents, but also, I realized, for herself. We took a cab to City Hall to arrange for a marriage license, as we planned to marry as soon as possible.

IN THE days that followed I began to realize that the ceremony I had just been through had confronted me baldly and without false delicacy with a way of looking at the world which was fundamentally different from my own and which, on inspection, turned out to have an enviable degree of power and coherence. Of course I had done some reading in preparation for my conversion and was not completely ignorant, I thought, of the distinctive nature of Judaism. But those attitudes with which I had some modest theoretical familiarity now leaped at me. I had seen them reified in the appearance of the *mikveh* and witnessed them in performance in the behavior of the rabbis. The business with the Kleenex, the small crisis in the bath, and even their indifference to my fancy *yarmulke*—all these, it seemed to me, vividly asserted the same proposition, one which I had known intellectually but had not so far really felt: in Judaism obedience to the Law is what matters. In the weeks following the ceremony that simple idea struck me with subversive force.

Perhaps, at the time, my own understanding of this notion was itself a simple-minded one. Bemused and in turn fascinated by the way the rabbis had devoted their attention to what seemed to me to be trivial matters, it is likely that I was making too much in my own mind of the prescriptive and behavioral elements in Judaism, and doing so, furthermore, at the expense of its spiritual content, its foundation in faith. I had perhaps taken the importance Judaism attaches to obedience to the Law, and accorded it a paramountcy even greater than that which it properly enjoys. I was thus myself seeing the religion in terms which were excessively mechanistic. What is more, in focusing just on the *idea* of obedience to the Law, and on that idea's psychological effects, I was scanting the Law's concrete substance, its myriad actual duties and obligations, its content and its rationale.

Still, this perspective, in spite of its distortions and oversimplifications, provided me with a means by which I could attempt to organize and "read" the events which had taken place. With some temerity, I found myself invoking what I judged to be a "Jewish" way of looking at things as I reflected on my recent experience. At a strict theological or scholarly level what ensued in my mind, I daresay, is dubious or at least incomplete. Nevertheless, this was indeed the way in which I approached the matter. And it gave the whole business, to my own satisfaction at least, a certain coherence.

For example, the course of action I had undertaken had much about it which had seemed to me dishonest. Was I selling out? Had I compromised my integrity and been untrue to myself? Were the concessions I had made to my future wife's family unreasonably large ones? Was my action inspired by magnanimity and tolerance, or merely by an unprincipled desire to avoid trouble, the product of my weaknesses and not of my strengths?

All nonsense: so the conversion itself, the manner in which it had taken place, seemed to be telling me. Such preoccupations I now deemed to be non-Jewish. These inspections of my inner condition had been fruitless, since they had led to no serious outcomes in my behavior. I could have stopped the whole business at any time if I really had been deeply concerned by them, instead of trying to have it both ways. It occurred to me that my thoughts could be regarded from a behavioral point of view—and this, it seemed, was a point of view which my conversion so clearly expressed—as part of the surface noise or chatter which modern people feel obliged to emit, especially when they are uncertain of themselves, and wish to assert their uniqueness: a kind of posturing. *This* world, however, of which I had been given so compelling a glimpse, had no place for such fancies. It was clear and confident in its purposes—ones which I saw displayed with unaffected poise and assurance. The rabbis knew exactly what *they* were doing, and why. But it was not only the insidious attraction of their

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moral certainty that touched me. Their point of view, I realized, if I had understood it correctly, was a very intelligent one.

I began to ask myself whether my own head was filled only with the residue of a Christian education, touched up now with the cant of modern psychology and contaminated further by some overindulgence in the reading of fiction. What, for example, was the "self" to which I might or might not have been true? For most purposes the idea of being true to oneself is unhelpful, since the concept is one which conveniently lends itself to endless redefinition. "To thine own self be true"—it is an injunction for 1960's flower children. It struck me that Judaism was perhaps wiser to stick to the clearer imperatives of the Ten Commandments, the outcomes of which were likely to be more predictable.

It goes without saying that Judaism is grounded in the idea of a transcendental God, an idea which the Jews were indeed the first in history to promulgate and champion. But as a religious system, Judaism, I was convinced, is on the whole a matter more of law than of faith. Certainly in every tiny respect the conduct of my conversion seemed designed to fix this truth in my mind. Since obedience to the God-given Law is the first requirement, it follows that motives are of secondary importance, and so too is inwardness. Right behavior might lead to a desirable inner state, but it is anyway virtuous in itself.

The utility of this point of view made an impression on me. It was more theoretically elegant than, though very different from, some of the ideas on which I myself had been brought up. I thought, for example, of the Christian concept of pride—T.S. Eliot's characterization of Thomas à Becket, agonizing about doing the right thing for the wrong reason. So far as I could tell, Judaism was mercifully free of this kind of agonizing.

MY CONVERSION was free of other things I was happy to dispense with, notably of any serious effort that I could detect on the part of the rabbis to imbue it with meanings beyond those which inhered in its procedures. They stuck to the Law, fulfilling but not embroidering its requirements. Blood was drawn, but the specified minimum sufficed. No avoidable or punitive mortification of the flesh was called for. From the seriousness with which these two matters were approached, I inferred that immersion and circumcision were the two most important requirements. On these two material points there could be no compromise. Evidently, however, compromises were in effect made elsewhere: precisely in the immaterial or "spiritual" domain where my own anxieties lay. My "sincerity" was more or less taken for granted. No one asked me directly, for example, whether I believed in God.

This surprised me, for I was brought up as a Welsh Nonconformist. In our chapel "sincerity" was held in such high esteem that it was often affected; people broke down theatrically in the midst of eloquent extempore prayer. Some of the attitudes of that form of religion were still embedded in me, for I was faintly shocked to find that the nature of my motives in converting was dealt with in such a relatively perfunctory way. It was touched on, of course, as it had to be, but formally and without emotion. This, I concluded, was also sensible. The rabbinical authorities know that most proselytes in these times are not driven by overwhelming conviction. Within the Law these people accommodated themselves to this fact.

Yet keeping within the Law had posed a problem for the head of the *Beth Din*, one which he resolved with skill, the product of much experience. In itself the desire to marry a Jew—the most common reason for conversion nowadays—is deemed to be unacceptable grounds for a conversion. I had therefore been warned by my friends on no account to mention my intended marriage. In most cases the rabbinical authorities can reasonably surmise that this is the proselyte's main concern, and the head of the *Beth Din* with whom I dealt in fact knew that in my case a wedding was in the offing. Nevertheless, neither he nor I mentioned the subject throughout our two long conversations. The convention that I had been seized in middle age by the universal truth of Judasim was scrupulously maintained, and by both of us.

"Why do you wish to become a Jew?" I cannot remember the details of the reply I gave to his no doubt obligatory question. But I do remember that my words sounded both pretentious and banal, though in fairness to myself, it is not a question to which a brief and convincing answer is easily imaginable. The rabbi listened to my effort impassively, and we moved on to safer, factual ground (my knowledge of the dietary laws), leaving the real reason for my presence there hovering almost palpably in the space between us. And yet, ten days later, when the ceremony in the *mikveh* was barely over, and the ink on my certificate hardly dry, the rabbi casually raised the forbidden subject. "When's the wedding?" he asked amiably.

I was astonished by this sudden change of tack. Why had he chosen to bring this embarrassing subject into the open? It was explained to me later that this was because the conversion was over, a *fait acompli*. The contract had been made; the "deed" had been done. Our earlier pretense had, therefore, been rendered obsolete.

I found out later, too, that even conversions entered into for ulterior reasons can be recognized in Jewish law *a posteriori*. The rabbi's remark was indeed after the event, if only by less than a minute. The rabbi had stayed within the Law—but only just, and, yet again, it seemed to

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me, conceding to it no more than it required, as though his relationship with God were an ingenious battle of wits.

I guessed too that the words I had uttered in the *mikveh* were deemed to be what the English philosopher J.L. Austin calls "performative" ones. They possessed a kind of magical autonomy, and their efficacy, I supposed, was not dependent on whether or not I "meant" them. Nor for that matter did the rabbi's private knowledge of those motives appear to alter the factuality or validity of what had taken place. I was out of my depth here. Where did the omniscient God of my childhood figure in all this? "He didn't *tell* me he was getting married, did he?," I imagined the rabbi expostulating to the Almighty, in his own defense.

All this was new to me, and for obvious reasons interesting. Some of my interest was, so to speak, anthropological in character. But it was also more than this. Everything that happened seemed to me to have a coherent and intelligible subtext. Motives, for example, it was surely implied, were not entities to be weighed and measured or inspected on a piece of Kleenex. No human art can decipher them, for they can be dissembled, and even the dissembler does not necessarily know what he is really doing. Judgments about motives, therefore, were not the prerogative of human beings. With decent modesty the rabbis seemed to be telling me that their competence lay in humbler spheres, and it was here that their zeal—to me it seemed like passion—could appropriately be directed. Was there blood on the needle? Did he touch the sides?

By concentrating their energies on such matters, they left my "self" alone, allowing me an area of privacy, and the effect of this was humane and civilized. Had they probed my state of mind in a similarly meticulous way, this would only have raised the level of dissimulation I anyway practiced, pushing up the stakes in a game whose outcome had already been, in effect, determined. Their approach, I judged, was a pragmatic one. A deal was being made. Was not the conversion a contractual event in every sense? At bottom the interests the rabbis served were ones calculated to help in the preservation of Jewishness; my different interests were equally respectable, and they could be reconciled with theirs. So, in much of what happened, and in what I surmised to be its meaning, there was something I chose to see as common sense. Nobody is perfect. Things are not always as they should be. Actions speak louder than words. Talk is indeed cheap. But an immersion is an immersion and a circumcision, a circumcision. This last in itself, I reflected, voluntarily endured in midde age, could reasonably be taken to bespeak the presence of at least some serious purpose.

I learned, and not only on an intellectual level, that Judaism is a rich and complex culture, and that its law is a subtle and refined and infinitely exacting one, based on an immense body of thought and experience. In the life of an observant Jew, obedience to the Law is an all-consuming, a transforming, commitment, and in its intensity it can make the "sincerity" of a Welsh Nonconformist look pale by comparison. All obvious enough, I suppose, but somehow my seeing it at work and lovingly handled in that obscure bathhouse—this is what made the impression.

Of course, my thoughts about what was happening to me were less charitable then than they are now. Whatever truth or validity they might contain (like that of my conversion itself) have been acquired *a posteriori*. Deeds first; inwardness later. The Jewish belief that this is the way things often work was nicely reflected in the pattern of my own feelings, so giving to that view of the world a further and disarming vindication.

A FEW days after the events I have described, the marriage took place. It was a Jewish wedding, performed by a Conservative rabbi—a representative of another large branch of contemporary Judaism. As a friend of the family he knew both of the rapidity of my conversion and my motives for it; he too, I suppose, applied the *a posteriori* principle in judging its validity.

On the *Ketubah*, or marriage contract, my new Jewish name, "David ben Abraham," was inscribed. Traditionally a proselyte, to symbolize his rebirth as a Jew, is required to take a new name, and his full entry into the body of the Jewish people is marked by his being called son of Abraham (or, in the case of a woman, daughter of Sarah). I had chosen the name "David," not for its biblical associations, but after my compatriot David Lloyd-George, something of a hero in my own Welsh Nonconformist family. As a child I had seen his image used on postcards, as though it were a landscape.

My gesture had been a tiny—albeit private—affirmation of my own tribal loyalties, amid the buffetings they were receiving. But the choice of name now seems an apposite one in other ways. Lloyd-George was adept in the art of compromise and not given to dogmatic or even firm adherence to principle. So this in itself made him a suitable figure after whom to name myself. His actions, on the other hand, it occurred to me, had impinged positively on the history of the Jews. His was the government which in 1917 issued (for all sorts of motives) the Balfour Declaration, and his was the policy—his personal commitment to Allenby's Palestine campaign in World War I—which rendered that document meaningful. There is a small street in Jerusalem, where we now live, named in Lloyd George's honor, and which I regularly pass when I go

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shopping with the small son and daughter of my second marriage.

My own actions in Brooklyn, in their immensely smaller way, of course, also affected the real world, even though if it were a rational place they should not have done so. My wife's parents were excessively, disproportionately, grateful for what I did there. Two or three months afterward my wife had a letter from her father. He hoped, he said, that my career in the BBC had not been jeopardized by my conversion; that my prospects there would not suffer; that I would not become the object of anti-Semitic feeling.

These thoughts were wide of the mark. My conversion, when it became known, was perhaps the cause for a short time of some amused gossip at the bar. My many Jewish colleagues, their careers not evidently damaged by anti-Semitism, looked at the matter with a mixture of curiosity and embarrassment. The most I had to endure were their facetious jokes ("*Oy vey*, so you're one of us already?"). These jokes have left no scars, though they might indicate the presence of some in those who made them.

But if my late father-in-law's observations showed some misapprehensions about the nature of the country I lived in and the organization I worked for, I found them all the more poignant. They came, I realized, from the heart of Central Europe, from the Hungary he and his wife had left in that fateful year 1933. His family had suffered grievously in the Holocaust. He saw my action as one that aligned me with the past sufferings of his people and as the guarantee that I would be obliged to share those sufferings in the future. In Israel where I now live (and I live there by right as a Jew, by virtue of the Law of Return), the possibility that I might be called upon to do so is real enough.

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A Cautionary Case of Bilingualism

Peter Brimelow

UNLIKE every other wave of mass immigration to the United States, the influx of Hispanics has been accompanied by widespread pressure for the development of some sort of institutional bilingualism. Spanish has been introduced into education and government, and voter fears of creeping bilingualism have already resulted in serious political upheavals, such as the overwhelming victory in 1986 of Proposition 63 making English the "official" language of the state of California. Significantly, Republican Governor George Deukmejian opposed Proposition 63 on the ground that it would be "confusing and counterproductive," and that he could not see any practical issue involved. But bilingualism may well be an issue that the electorate at large instinctively understands better than political professionals. This year Deukmejian, a quick learner, vetoed an extension of the state law on bilingual education. Still, the problem has hardly gone away, in California or elsewhere.

What the future may hold is very hard to say, but there exists, literally on the U.S. doorstep, a chillingly instructive example of how bilingualism can work in a very practical way to distort and disrupt a country.

FOR the American visitor entering Canada today, French on the official notices in the airport often constitutes the first concrete evidence that he has landed in another country. But this would not have been the case before the 1960's. At that time, Canadians viewed themselves as belonging to an English-speaking country which happened to contain a French-speaking minority. As late as the 1950's, French was invisible in most of Canada and rarely spoken even in the House of Commons, although French Canadians working in English had reached the highest government offices even before 1867, when the separate Canadian provinces, the equivalent of U.S. states, joined together to form the present confederation.

About a quarter of Canada's 24 million people are French-speaking—"Francophones" in the jargon invented by Canada's federal bureaucracy in Ottawa. (English speakers are "Anglophones," immigrants with other mother-tongues are "Allophones," and Indians and Eskimos "Endophones.") Almost all the Francophones live in the province of Quebec, bordering New York State and New England, where they form the substantial majority; a few hundred thousand overlap into the contiguous provinces of Ontario to the west and New Brunswick to the east. In the 2.6 million square miles between the Ontario line and the Pacific, containing some seven million people, only 86,665 told the 1981 census-takers that they spoke French in their homes.

Francophone ethnocentrism has been a continuous subcurrent in Canada's politics since the British ended France's colonial rule in the mid-18th century. Periodically it has precipitated national crises, as over the question of conscription during both world wars. But mostly it has been contained within Quebec, where the Francophones contented themselves with totally monopolizing local government institutions. In the 1960's, however, Francophone nationalism began to take an explicitly separatist form. Symbolically, Francophones no longer referred to themselves as *Canadiens*—thus casting a subtle aspersion on the legitimacy of *les Anglais*, their British-descended fellow citizens—but as *Québecois*, implying they had no fellow citizens at all.

Few countries welcome secessionists, but the specter of an independent Quebec was a particularly acute threat to Canada's political order. Francophone votes in national elections were the keystone of the long-dominant federal Liberal party's Center-Left electoral coalition. Frantic efforts were therefore made to counter Quebec separatism, resulting in a new institutional synthesis. The revised official formula now held that the Canadian polity contained two coextensive and coequal "founding nations," French- and English-speaking. The federal government was to provide them with "services" in their language of choice everywhere—from coast to coast. Bilingualism was also to be urged upon the provincial governments. Here Ottawa's direct powers of persuasion were limited, but it has achieved some success by funding local Francophone organizations to agitate for "services" in French.

The concept of a binational, bicultural, and bilingual Canada was the central preoccupation of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada for all but a few months from 1968 to 1984. Trudeau was a Francophone *Québecois*, but he was also a man of the Left who feared Quebec nationalism because of its clerical and reactionary past. He sought to persuade Francophones to accept Canada, not Quebec, as their political expression, and he implemented federal bilingualism regardless of cost and with fanatical attention to detail. Incomparably the most powerful per-

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sonality on the federal scene, Trudeau was also able to make bilingualism the sacred cow of Canadian politics and drive opposition to it underground.

ALL unilinguals are seriously disadvantaged in modern Canada. The unspoken corollary of federal bilingualism was that the civil service would have to be staffed to a decisive degree by bilinguals, as would agencies like the armed forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Canada's very extensive array of government-owned businesses, such as Air Canada.

Thus the inexorable consequence of Canadian public policy since the 1960's has been the creation of a society of first- and second-class citizens. Only the first, bilingual, class is fully eligible for careers with the largest Canadian employer, the federal government and its affiliates, since all important posts require both languages. And the reach of the federal bureaucracy is surprisingly long. It has been able to require bilingualism of shop assistants in the airports of English-speaking cities and of post-office employees in remote English-speaking villages. In some instances this has meant firing locals and importing a *Québecois*.

Moreover, in undertaking to operate in both languages from coast to coast, the Canadian federal government was imposing upon itself a form of bilingualism that was peculiarly radical. In Belgium, by contrast, a country one-third of 1 percent of Canada's land area, and where 60 percent of the population speaks Flemish and 40 percent French, only Brussels is officially bilingual. Nine out of ten Belgians live in unilingual regions where government is conducted exclusively in either Flemish or French. Yet about half the Belgians can speak both languages. In Canada, institutional bilingualism completely lacks any such foundation in demographic or cultural reality. Its effects are therefore sharply skewed.

According to the 1981 Canadian census, only 15.3 percent of Canada's population claimed to be able to "conduct a conversation" in both "official languages." This figure has remained more or less stable for many years, with little sign of yielding to Ottawa's two-decade efforts to expand it. Indeed, any increased bilingualism among Anglophones seems likely to be countered by decreased bilingualism among the Francophones, for whom Quebec is becoming an ever-more exclusive linguistic reservation. All the evidence suggests that free peoples just do not readily learn foreign languages on a mass scale, particularly when there is nothing in their culture or personal lives to reinforce it. And the average inhabitant of Toronto hears no more French than his counterpart in Toledo or Tampa.

Canada's bilingual group is heavily Francophone, by a factor of two to one. It is also almost entirely located in "Central Canada"—the two neighboring provinces of Ontario and Quebec, Canada's equivalent of the Boston-New York-Washington axis. This region reported 81.2 percent of the country's bilinguals in 1981, and adjacent New Brunswick another 5 percent. Still, it should be noted that bilingualism remains completely atypical of both "official language" communities. Nearly two out of three French speakers, and nearly fifteen out of sixteen English speakers, remain stolidly unilingual. In an important sense, these two communities are, and have always been, separate nations.

Thus, above all else, official bilingualism in Canada has been a supreme exercise in social engineering. Its immediate effects have been strikingly regressive. By putting a premium on the ability to speak both "official languages," it has reinforced the position of disproportionately bilingual groups from whom power was otherwise slipping: the Francophones, who had been losing power because their relative share of Canada's population was falling; the Anglophone business elite in Quebec's commercial center of Montreal, formerly the metropolis of all Canada but now eclipsed by Toronto and other Anglophone cities; the pivotal region of "Central Canada," as economic growth in the West threatened its predominance.

Since the Anglophones are in a substantial majority in Canada, bilingualism cannot be used to drive them completely out of public life, which was the tendency in white South Africa as the Afrikaaner nationalists gained power. But it has seriously qualified their role.

Rather like the sign of the cross in Dracula movies, bilingualism has also proved useful in neutralizing potential political threats to Canada's institutional order. When the federal Progressive Conservative party chose a new leader in 1983, it came under intense pressure to pick one fluent in both "official languages," although virtually all of its support came from unilingual English Canada and it could technically have won enough seats there to form a government without any Francophone support at all. This scared out of the race a strong Western candidate, the premier of Alberta, and seriously destabilized the campaign of John Crosbie, from the Atlantic province of Newfoundland (who would probably still have succeeded if the English-speaking convention delegates had not been supplemented by French speakers conjured up by affirmative action in Quebec). The winner was an unrepresentative, Wendell Willkie-type sport, Brian Mulroney, an emollient Montreal labor lawyer with roots in the semi-Francophone Irish community of rural Quebec. Mulroney had only joined the party because of an accident of sectarian politics in his youth. He had never fought a parliamentary election, and his Conservative credentials were essentially based on his self-appointed role as the party's ambassador to the Francophones.

Like Willkie, Mulroney has tried to force his party to accept the reforms of its opponents. In the general election of 1984, he duly carried Quebec, but only as part of an anti-incumbent sweep in which the Progressive Conservatives also won enough seats in English Canada to give them a parliamentary majority. Subsequently, Mulroney appears to have succeeded in alienating the Progressive Conservatives' traditional supporters without attracting new

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ones. The party is now facing annihilation, running a bad third in opinion polls behind the Liberals and the socialist New Democrats.

Perhaps even more important in the Canadian context than the effect of the bilingualism policy on elective politics is the subtle but powerful encouragement it gives to Canada's federal civil service, proportionately substantially larger than its U.S. counterpart. After years of quotas and hiring requirements, this is the only community that remotely approaches the bilingual, bicultural ideal to which the country has been officially committed. Like the Prussian army, the Ottawa bureacracy can regard itself as the true repository of national values. Its self-confidence and aggression have correspondingly expanded.

A single vignette: in the 1970's Ottawa responded to the energy crisis with an astonishingly ambitious "National Energy Program," ostensibly aimed at foreign oil companies but in fact expropriating the windfall profits that would otherwise have accrued to Western Canada. Ottawa's chosen instrument in energy policy was PetroCanada, a federally-owned corporation which is accordingly subject to bilingualism. In the totally Anglophone Western oil capital of Calgary, switchboard operators at PetroCanada's head office were required to answer calls in the approved Ottawa style: "Good morning—PetroCanada—*bonjour*."

WITH such powerful friends, it may seem only a detail that the bilingual policy is completely failing to achieve its supposed goals. The 1981 census made clear that Canada's population has continued to polarize: the numbers of English speakers in Quebec and French speakers outside Quebec fell both in relative and absolute terms. Bilingualism has not persuaded Canadians that they can live and work in the language of their choice throughout the country. They have been quietly voting against the policy with their U-Haul trucks.

Moreover, official bilingualism has failed to stem Quebec's glacial emergence as a nation-state. No aspect of Canada's politics has been subject to a more continuous self-deception. Despite bilingualism, Francophone nationalists in Quebec coalesced behind the *Parti Québecois*, which won provincial elections in 1976 and 1981, and remains the official opposition. Although its referendum seeking a mandate to negotiate more autonomy was defeated in 1980, legislation aimed at repressing the public use of English and turning Quebec into a unilingual French-only society remains today substantially intact.

The reason for this paradox is simple: all sections of Francophone opinion in Quebec agree that the province should be a French state. They disagree only on the technical issue of whether it would be better off with or without the rest of Canada. In Montreal, the *Parti Québecois* served the historical function of deposing the Anglophone business elite. All the *Québecois* are now happily digesting the resultant gains.

In 1987, furthermore, Quebec autonomy advanced to a further stage. The Mulroney government and the provinces concluded a round of constitutional negotiations that had been promised in 1981 as part of the federalist strategy aimed at defeating the *Parti Québecois* referendum. Among other things, the "Meech Lake Agreement" recognized Quebec as a "distinct society" with prime responsibility to represent Francophones. Not surprisingly, former Prime Minister Trudeau has bitterly attacked Mulroney's weakness in abandoning this key element in his attempt to build a binational polity from coast to coast. Even less surprisingly, given their recent record of appeasement, no English-speaking politician has pointed out that Meech Lake meant English Canadians had the worst of both worlds, paying the price of Trudeau's binational Canada but at the same time getting a French Quebec.

IN A parliamentary system without primaries, an all-party conspiracy of silence can repress popular sentiment for some considerable time. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that resentment of bilingualism among English-speaking Canadians is profound. When in 1984 an unusual combination of circumstances made possible a referendum on the issue in the Western province of Manitoba, it was rejected by margins of up to 90 percent, losing even in the few French-speaking enclaves. Bilingualism is a factor in Brian Mulroney's precipitous decline and has also had a hand in the virtually complete disappearance of the federal Liberal party from the West, an area it once dominated. Indeed, the most recent development in Canadian politics is a stirring of particularist and even separatist splinter groups in the West, reflecting the region's alienation from Pierre Trudeau's Quebec-oriented version of confederation.

At the heart of the binational, bicultural concept of Canada is a fundamental contradiction: the two linguistic groups are unequal in size and distribution, let alone aspirations. Redressing the balance requires a continuous effort by the federal government, of a type that is difficult to sustain in a democratic society. Pierre Trudeau managed it for a while, for a variety of personal and political reasons, but Brian Mulroney was forced to yield on the issue of Quebec's special status, and future federal Prime Ministers will yield further, particularly when demography prevails and an all-Anglophone federal goverment is elected.

IN ONE sense, this means that for Canada there is a way out of the bilingualism box. Special status for Quebec will eventually take most Francophones out of federal politics. In the United States, by contrast, where the Hispanic population (which has grown by some 30 percent since 1980, five times faster than the national average) is very widely dispersed, there is no such obvious geographical solution to the developing movement for bilingualism. Thus the bilingual problem in the U.S. may turn out to be even more serious in its own way than it has been in Canada. A chilling prospect indeed.

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Dealing With the Soviets

MORTAL RIVALS: SUPERPOWER RELATIONS FROM NIXON TO REAGAN. By WILLIAM G. HYLAND. *Random House. 271 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by OWEN HARRIES

WHEN Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger assumed responsibility for the foreign policy of the United States in 1969, they faced a horrendous situation. The country was mired in a no-win war and deeply torn internally; loss of credibility was undermining American leadership of the alliances which had been the center of policy since the days of George Marshall and Dean Acheson; and the rapid growth of Soviet military power threatened to place the United States in a position of strategic inferiority. The immediate and urgent task facing Nixon and Kissinger was to restore America's position of power as quickly as possible.

But in the case of Kissinger, at least, ambition went far beyond that goal. At this moment of American weakness, he set out to attempt no less than the creation of a new international order, one that would allow U.S.-Soviet relations to be handled on a more stable and secure basis than had existed since the onset of the cold war.

Such an order would only work if its legitimacy were accepted by the major Communist powers, and particularly by the Soviet Union. Giving Moscow a sense of belonging was therefore crucial to the enterprise, and that meant granting it the equal status as a superpower that it desperately wanted. Détente, properly understood, both contributed toward the creation of such a structure and ultimately depended on its coming into being. The essence of détente was the use of all the resources of the United States—political, military, and economic—to create a basis for stabilizing and managing relations with the Soviet Union. But to be more than a passing phase, dependent on the skill and will of one exceptional man, it had to be institutionalized and firmly embedded in the structures that were to constitute the new order.

How was all this to be brought about, given the weakness of the American position? The main thing that Kissinger had going for him—indeed, in the initial period virtually the *only* thing that gave him leverage—was the Sino-Soviet conflict. In 1969, the year of fighting along the Ussuri river border between China and the USSR, that conflict was particularly acute. Following his own analysis of Bismarck's strategy, Kissinger immediately began a policy of "manipulating the antagonisms" of the contending forces: first exploiting China's fears of the Soviet Union to edge toward a new relationship between Washington and Peking, and then exploiting Soviet fears of a Chinese-American rapprochement to make Moscow more accommodating.

The new policy required other innovations as well: the substitution of a more power-political and issue-oriented approach for the ideological one that had prevailed over the previous twenty years; the adoption of a policy of "linkage," whereby progress on issues of interest to the Soviets was tied to progress on matters of concern to the United States; the elevation of strategic arms control, the one issue on which it was assumed the two superpowers had a clear mutual interest, to the top of the negotiating agenda; and, of course, the creation of the famous "web" of relationships that was so to entangle Moscow as to commit it to an era of negotiations. All these were "instruments of larger policy" and were to be judged as such, rather than in isolation and on their own merits.

THE above, in brief, is the description and rationale of Kissinger's Soviet policy offered by William Hyland in *Mortal Rivals*. Hyland's credentials for expounding on the subject are outstanding. Now the editor of *Foreign Affairs*, he was—along with Lawrence Eagleburger, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Alexander Haig, Peter Rodman, Winston Lord, and a few others—a member of the core group around Kissinger throughout his years in office. During that period Hyland rose steadily in the hierarchy, ending up as Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, a position he continued to hold during the first year of the Carter administration. Hyland's main area of responsibility during the Kissinger period was U.S.-Soviet relations, and especially arms-control negotiations, and it is on these that his book concentrates.

Those whose resolution has faltered at the prospect of tackling the 2,700 pages (so far) of Kissinger's own memoirs will be relieved to hear that *Mortal Rivals* is short: a mere two hundred pages on the years 1969 to 1976, followed by sixty more on the Carter and Reagan Presidencies. But a warning is in order. Short and extremely interesting as it is, Hyland's book is not a particularly easy read. Its very brevity, combined with the inherent complexity of the issues with which it deals, make for a compressed and densely textured work.

What gives *Mortal Rivals* vitality and sustains interest, even more than the insider's anecdotes and vignettes sprinkled through it, is the fact that it is a healthily opinionated and combative book. Hyland makes no pretense of being impartial or above the debate. He writes as a committed advocate, prepared to give ground on some secondary matters but resolute in joining issue on the central questions of Kissinger's record, and

OWEN HARRIES, *formerly the Australian ambassador to UNESCO and head of policy planning in the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, is co-editor of the* National Interest.

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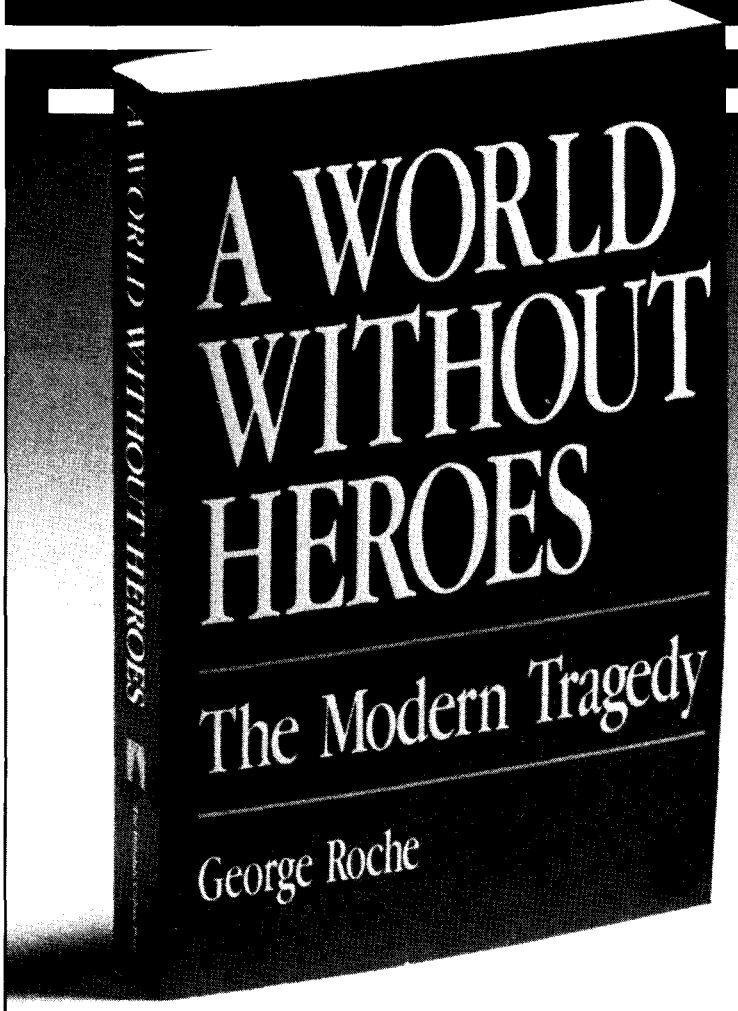

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laying about him vigorously in dealing with critics, particularly those on the Right. The words "nonsense" and "silly" come readily to his pen. In a culture in which a mealy-mouthed hedging and covering of bets is much too readily equated with tolerance and objectivity, this is refreshing. It invites and deserves the compliment of a response in kind.

A central, unresolved (indeed, apparently unrecognized) tension runs through *Mortal Rivals*—as it did through Kissinger's performance itself. It is the tension between the requirements of the two primary goals pursued: the restoration of America's power position and the creation of a new international order. One called for the pressing of advantage, the clear acceptance of competition and conflict of interest; the other for restraint and accommodation. In personal terms it is the tension between Kissinger the antagonist (the one Nixon most valued) and Kissinger the international impresario (the role he himself increasingly favored). This tension is evident throughout Hyland's book.

Take, for example, his treatment of the Nixon-Kissinger China policy. In the first chapter it is forthrightly described thus: "The core of the new policy was a classical reversal of alliances, in which China, in effect, joined the West against Russia." That seems clear enough. But as the book and events proceed, it becomes less so. As Kissinger becomes more absorbed in finding an accommodation with Moscow, as Brezhnev harps on the danger China represents to both superpowers, and as, around 1972, it becomes clear that "for the Soviets a U.S. willingness to drop the China option and take up a semi-alliance with Moscow" is a critical test of détente, the idea of a Sino-U.S. alliance against Russia gives way to that of a "rapprochement with both China and the Soviet Union."

The difference between the two positions is never acknowledged clearly by Hyland, though it represents a shift of major proportions. At one point he writes: "Looking back now, I realize that Soviet-American relations were altered in this period not by better 'understanding' or more contacts but by a change in the raw balance of power in favor of a new anti-Soviet coalition." But he continues to write in defense of the pursuit of "understanding" and "more contacts," and to criticize sharply those who persisted in a robust hostility to Moscow.

THERE is a similar ambiguity in his treatment of military power and arms control. In *White House Years*, Kissinger quotes approvingly from a paper written by Hyland in 1970:

> The Soviets respect power and strength. They understand military strength best of all. This does not mean, of course, that they are eager to fight, or that they believe in the indiscriminate use of force. But they do not understand restraint; it confuses them, and in the end leads them to conclude that there is room for their own forward movement.

There is little along these lines in *Mortal Rivals*. Instead we are told that at the very time that Hyland was writing these words, "both superpowers found that their ability to translate military power into political influence was limited, and these limits were becoming more and more evident." The concern of the "incorrigible right wing" with achieving an equal level of strategic arms is dismissed as "a fatal error" and "meaningless," and its impatience with the restraint that the younger Hyland himself thought mistaken is deplored.

Kissinger long ago recanted the position implied in his famous question, "What, in the name of God, is strategic superiority?" But Hyland considers it "still relevant" and maintains that "Neither side has developed a convincing answer in the intervening thirteen years." Yet surely when he observes that strategic weapons had become, in effect, the surrogates for war, and that if one country surged ahead in number or quality of weapons it was entitled to geopolitical gains, he provides his own answer.

Hyland takes some shots at the State Department, the Pentagon, and the bureaucratic negotiating teams, as well as the political Right, for their attitudes toward arms control. Some of these are well-directed. But was the view that the substance of arms-control negotiating positions should properly be subordinated to the achieving of a rather nebulous new international structure, and to the maintaining of the momentum of détente ("all that we wanted at this point was to demonstrate movement, and to break one of the stalemates"), any more defensible?

ACCORDING to *Mortal Rivals*, Kissinger in dealing with Moscow deliberately deemphasized the ideological element in the relationship and the question of Soviet intentions in order to focus on opportunities for specific accommodations. This approach is reflected in the book itself. Although Hyland is an expert on the Soviet Union, he offers little analysis of the forces shaping that country's foreign policy or speculation about its motives. And ideology is virtually totally ignored, not even rating a mention in the forty-four-line entry under "Soviet Union" in the index.

What does receive full, fascinating, and overwhelmingly favorable treatment is the character of the Soviet leaders, particularly Brezhnev. Indeed, while Kissinger is, predictably, the hero of the book, Brezhnev is cast in the improbable role of its lovable rogue. He has the amusing habit of pilfering black binder clips from the American delegation and cigarettes from Podgorny. He tells "touching" anecdotes. He is charming and persuasive. He "plaintively" produces photos for inspection and writes "rather pathetic" pleas to Kissinger. Moreover, as the relationship develops, his psychological dependence on Kissinger apparently becomes marked:

> It was rather poignant to see how this old man, hardened by the rough-and-tumble of Soviet politics, known as an anti-Semite, would reach out to the German-Jewish refugee who had become Secretary of State in circumstances that could never

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be replicated in the Soviet Union, and plead for help.

By the end one is left wondering how such an old softy ever made it to the top in the Kremlin.

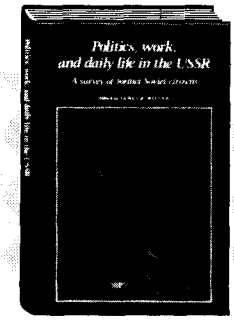
An even more pertinent question arises: if Kissinger and Brezhnev got on so well and if both genuinely wanted détente to succeed, why did it not? Hyland gives various answers to this question in different places: (1) Watergate dealt the policy a crippling blow; (2) the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan killed it; (3) it became too exclusively a European policy and was not extended effectively to the Third World; (4) it failed because of "the weakness of its indigenous roots" in the American political culture, the country as a whole not understanding the "subtle weaving of intellectual and geopolitical strands" that the policy required; and (5) actually détente did not really fail—for all practical purposes the Reagan administration today is pursuing the same policy Henry Kissinger put into place a decade and a half ago.

Obviously, all these answers cannot be true. Perhaps none of them is. For there is at least one other possible answer that Hyland does not consider seriously, and that indeed the setting-aside of ideology does not permit him to consider. That is, that the weakness of détente's "indigenous roots" in *Soviet* political culture, the fact that it conflicted with the basic legitimizing myths of the regime, meant that it never really had a chance. In *Mortal Rivals*, people who hold such a view tend to be dismissed as leftovers from "the era of virulent anti-Communism."

In fact, such people are presented as the principal villains of the Kissinger period, the main source of destructive "nonsense" and "absurd" criticism of what was being attempted. There is, shall we say, a certain lack of generosity in the way opposition to détente from the Right is treated. Take, for example, the case of the late Senator Henry Jackson, who comes in for some notably rough treatment for his attempt to engage in a bit of "linkage" of his own, with the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the trade bill. This made most-favored-nation treatment for the Soviet Union conditional on free emigration for Jews. Given the subsequent record of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union, there certainly is room for legitimate argument about the wisdom of the amendment. But Hyland goes far beyond that. Jackson's effort is characterized as "typical of classical anti-Communists," "cynical," "simply another effort to break the momentum of détente" by a man who knew better, and motivated by his presidential ambitions. Once motives have been impugned in this way, the common ground left is very limited.

Again, there is the treatment of President Ford's failure to receive Solzhenitsyn at the White House. In the three paragraphs Hyland devotes to the episode, the failure is attributed to a foul-up at lower levels. But most of his energy and space are devoted to attacking those who were critical of it. George Will was silly about the whole thing, while it was "typical of the American right wing" that it could be agitated about Soviet dissidents but (he alleges) could not rouse itself over the fate of Portgual and Angola, which was then in the balance. As for Solzhenitsyn himself, there is no acknowledgment of his towering moral stature or talent, merely the dismaying and gratuitous remark that "This, of course, was before Solzhenitsyn revealed some of his more unpalatable views about democracy and the United States."

GIVEN this hostility, it is not surprising that when Hyland comes to deal with Reagan's policies, phrases like "cynically gambling," "cavalier attitude," "fundamental contradiction," "effective public relations," and "gimmick" proliferate. The contempt of the sophisticated disciple of Kissinger for the *crudeness* of it all is barely concealed. But there is a problem. For, say what you like about the



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rest of Reagan's foreign policy (and it has certainly not been altogether a thing of beauty), the truth is that he has been remarkably successful in dealing with the Soviets.

He defeated them, and the European Left, over the Euromissile issue. He has effectively changed the rules as far as conflicts in the Third World are concerned. He has had Moscow coming to him, on the basis of his proposals, on arms control. It may even be the case that he has been an essential factor in the Soviet move toward internal reform; for, had they been faced with a more compliant and accommodating American President than Reagan, the Soviet leaders might well have chosen to defer hard choices.

So how to explain Reagan's success? Hyland does so in terms of luck and change. First, the confusion and weakness in the Kremlin resulting from the drawn-out succession problem gave the Reagan administration "a free ride for almost four years." Second, in office Reagan came increasingly to resemble his predecessors, moving in practice, if not in rhetoric, "from a position well to the right to a position almost in the center of the road." Thus his successes were achieved despite, not because of, his ideological position.

The first of these explanations clearly has some substance. During his first term, the fact that Reagan dealt with three dying Soviet leaders in succession certainly eased his task. But in speaking of his "luck" it should also be remembered that since 1985 he has had to deal with the smartest Soviet leader since Stalin—the nearest equivalent to a Kissinger yet produced by the Kremlin. (Indeed, bearing in mind Kissinger's own good fortune in having the "pathetic" Brezhnev to deal with, it is fascinating to speculate how he would have coped with a Gorbachev, a man whose capacity for risk-taking and bold maneuver seems to match his own. Could the world have survived two such high-wire performances simultaneously?)

As to the second of Hyland's explanations of Reagan's success, it seems to me to have much less substance. Of course, Reagan has changed somewhat in office, but much less so than most Presidents. His success in dealing with the Soviet Union has resulted from policies and positions that few recent mainstream practitioners of American foreign policy would have adopted: the Reagan doctrine of supporting resistance fighters against Communist regimes; a steady refusal to hasten toward compromises in order to avert confidently predicted catastrophe; the deployment of a rhetoric that matched the Soviets' own in militancy; the espousal of the Strategic Defense Initiative in defiance of conventional arms-control wisdom; a willingness to live without the political advantages of summit meetings for years on end.

YET to say all this is not to deny that there have been—and are—serious deficiencies in Reagan's foreign-policy performance. His repeated failures to select the ablest people to fill key positions; the near-disaster of Reykjavik; the shambles of the Iran-*contra* affair —these and many other lesser items in his record make it clear that there is much to fault.

Currently, the proposed INF agreement illustrates (as did Reykjavik before it) one of Reagan's fundamental weaknesses: his belief, shared by most liberals, that nuclear weapons are in themselves evil and that getting rid of them is in itself a good thing. To the extent that this belief holds sway in his mind—and it has been a constant theme in his rhetoric—not only the Western alliance but the peace of the world is endangered. As inanimate *things* nuclear weapons have no innate moral properties. They can be put to good or evil uses. In the last four decades, as the indispensable tools of deterrence, they have been a force for good; until the West finds other means of ensuring deterrence —and it will not do so for years to come—they will continue to be indispensable.

None of this, however, alters the fact that in his dealings with the Soviets Reagan has been remarkably successful in getting what he wants and in resisting what he does not want. In *that* respect, the lesson of Reaganism—unpalatable both to liberals and adroit practitioners of realism—may be that in dealing with the Soviet Union, if there is to be a choice, steadfastness and the understanding of a few simple but crucial truths are more important than a mastery of complexity and maneuver, however dazzling they may be. If we are in for a "Gorbachev Era," the importance of this lesson is likely to increase rather than diminish.

A Classic

TEVYE THE DAIRYMAN AND THE RAILROAD STORIES. By SHOLEM ALEICHEM. Translated and with an Introduction by HILLEL HALKIN. *Library of Yiddish Classics/ Schocken. 309 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ROBERT ALTER

SHOLEM ALEICHEM (pen-name for Sholem Rabinovich, born in Russia, 1859, died in New York, 1916) remains the central figure of modern Yiddish fiction—not with regard to technique or style, which have since followed other paths, but in his profound identification through his characters and his vivid narrators with the collective spirit of Yiddish-speaking Jewry. In his own lifetime he rapidly achieved the status, with the attendant simplifications, not of writer but of beloved folk hero. His funeral in New York, attended by scores of thousands, was a rite of national mourning.

Sholem Aleichem's relation both to his fictional materials and to his audience was essentially episodic and conversational. The two works drawn together in this new volume were both composed over a span of years by fits and starts. *Tevye the Dairyman*, probably Sholem Aleichem's most famous work, began as a story published separately in 1894. Further tales of the struggling Tevye's tribulations with his daughters were produced in 1899,

ROBERT ALTER *is professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at Berkeley. He is co-editor, with Frank Kermode, of* The Literary Guide to the Bible, *which has just been published by Harvard University Press.*

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1904, 1905, 1907; and even after the first publication as a book in 1911, the writer continued to fiddle with the material, adding an episode as late as 1914.

Tevye, though not strictly speaking a novel, benefits from the unifying presence of its narrator-protagonist, who in his shrewd humor, his flamboyant absurdities, his capacity for deep affection, and his sheer energy of persistence, is one of the great characters of modern fiction. By contrast, *The Railroad Stories*, a total of twenty short pieces written in two series, 1902-03 and 1909-10, is patently an assemblage of miscellaneous tales. In this case, the frame that holds the episodes together is purely formal: a traveling salesman who goes back and forth on trains through the Pale of Settlement, listening to the sundry stories of the Jews packed into the third-class carriages and reporting their words to the reader.

THE enormous difficulty in translating Sholem Aleichem is that his fiction is more talk than story or novelistic evocation, its deep interest flowing from the charm, the wit, the terrific energy of the talk. In fact, there is in Sholem Aleichem a good deal of talk about the attractions of talk, and when, in one of *The Railroad Stories* ("Elul"), an actual Russian novel rears its Gentile head, the narrator wants to make sense of it in his own anecdotal terms: "Just tell me how it ends, what's the punch line?" But in Sholem Aleichem's own writing, even anecdotal plot and point are often secondary to sheer talking performance. This is true in the catalogue of mounting disasters with daughters that is the narrative frame of *Tevye*, and it is even more evident in *The Railroad Stories*, many of which are really shaggy-dog stories broken off before they come to any resolution. As the narrator says at the beginning of the last piece in the collection, "This is not so much a story as a little chat."

What is all the talk for? As Hillel Halkin aptly puts it in his introduction, the spoken word in Sholem Aleichem is "many things: a club, a cloud, a twitch, a labyrinth, a smokescreen, a magic wand, a madly waved paper fan, a perpetual motion machine, a breastwork against chaos, the very voice of chaos itself." Let me underline the double function of defending against chaos and giving it a voice. Although Sholem Aleichem abundantly deserves his reputation as a compassionate comic writer, his stories record the most dismal accumulation of catastrophes: daughters disappear, commit suicide, or, what is worse, apostasy; people are bamboozled out of their life savings; children are smitten with incurable diseases; dear ones suddenly perish; and, on the historical scale, the whole fabric of family, *shtetl* community, and traditional life is torn apart. The mechanism of brilliant, wild garrulity, wittily playing with biblical verses, clowning with proverbial expressions, flaunting absurdities, is thus a nervous dance with the forces of dissolution, at once a recognition of their inexorability and a paradoxically buoyant expression of superiority to them.

Tevye knows his own powerlessness as surely as any protagonist of Kafka's, but he knows the consolation of language as well, is pleased to pretend (and pleases his readers through the pretense) that language is an ultimate source of power. Thus, he mutters to himself about the most arrogant and infuriating of his sons-in-law: "Just you wait, you Putzhoddur, you, I'll let you have such a verse from the Bible that you'll see fireworks before your eyes."

This whole comic conjunction of language and anguish is badly explained by the old soppy formula of laughter through tears. The hilarity is a mode of mental survival, even an expression of resilience, but it is often used at the same time by Sholem Aleichem's sundry speakers to hone the tooth of suffering that gnaws at them inwardly.

THE translator's quandary is how to convey this power of oral performance in a language that lacks Yiddish's interplay of Germanic, Hebraic, and Slavic elements, its easy use of scriptural and rabbinic citation, its reservoir of distinctive folk sayings, its panoply of habit-

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ual little phrases for the invocation of blessing and the averting of misfortune. Hillel Halkin, who over the past fifteen years has firmly established himself as the leading English translator of Hebrew fiction, undertakes a Yiddish work here for the first time. Although he confesses that his Yiddish is not nearly as solid as his Hebrew, and that for matters of accuracy he has had to depend on the expertise of his editor, Ruth R. Wisse, he has produced a brilliant English version of Sholem Aleichem, easily eclipsing all previous translations.

Let me illustrate by quoting the opening lines of Halkin's *Tevye* and then the same passage in the 1946 translation by Julius and Frances Butwin.

Halkin: If you're meant to strike it rich, Pani Sholem Aleichem, you may as well stay at home with your slippers on, because good luck will find you there too. The more it blows the better it goes, as King David says in his Psalms—and believe me, neither brains nor brawn has anything to do with it. And vice versa: if it's not in the cards you can run back and forth till you're blue in the face, it will do as much good as last winter's snow. How does the saying go? Flogging a dead horse won't make it run any faster. A man slaves, works himself to the bone, is ready to lie down and die—it shouldn't happen to the worst enemies of the Jews. Suddenly, don't ask me how or why, it rains gold on him from all sides. In a word, *revakh vehatsoloh ya'amoyd layehudim*, just like it says in the Bible! That's too long a verse to translate, but the general gist of it is that as long as a Jew lives and breathes in this world and hasn't more than one leg in the grave, he mustn't lose faith.

Butwin: If you are destined to draw the winning ticket in the lottery, Mr. Sholom Aleichem, it will come right into your house without your asking for it. As King David says, "It never rains but it pours." You don't need wisdom or skill. And, on the contrary, if you are not inscribed as a winner in the Book of Angels, you can talk yourself blue in the face—it won't help you. The *Talmud* is right: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." A person slaves, wears himself to the bone, and gets nowhere. He might as well lie down and give up his ghost. Suddenly, no one knows how or for what reason, money rolls in from all sides. As the passage has it, "Relief and deliverance will come to the Jews." I don't have to explain that to you. It should be clear to both of us that so long as a Jew can still draw breath and feel the blood beating in his veins, he must never lose hope.

THE obvious stiffness and literary formality of the Butwin version ("the winning ticket in the lottery," "give up his ghost," "as the passage has it") scarcely need commentary. Halkin's English, by contrast, here and throughout the book, has a kind of Runyonesque colloquial snappiness which is partly a matter of diction, partly a consequence of the bouncy rhythms, the alliterations, and the improvised rhymes that give the prose the liveliness of oral performance. To achieve this general effect, he allows himself—with good warrant, I think—a certain degree of freedom. Thus, the slippers of the opening sentence are a little embellishment absent from the Yiddish but one which helps set the needed note of colloquial vividness; the little joke at the end about four Hebrew words (from Esther) being "too long a verse to translate" is not in the original, which says more or less what the Butwin version says at this point, but it is perfectly in keeping with the jocular use of citation, and Tevye's statement in the Yiddish that the verse needs no translation is a good deal less appropriate for English readers than what he says in Halkin's version.

This problem of how to convey in English Sholem Aleichem's zany play with traditional Jewish texts and practices is crucial for any translator. The Butwins' strategy in general is to make Tevye sound pious—here, for example, by introducing the Book of Angels and the Talmud, neither of which is mentioned in the Yiddish. Halkin, by contrast, either finds a way to get across the gist of the joke or, when that is impossible, tries to create an equivalent joke.

Thus the horse, refusing to drink in the Butwins and dead in Halkin, is part of a wonderfully absurd non-sequitur quotation in the Yiddish: *Eyn khokhmoh ve'eyn eytsoh neged a shlekht ferd*. The first five words are Hebrew, from Proverbs 21:30: "*There is neither wisdom nor counsel against* . . . a bad horse." Since the bilingual clowning cannot pass the barrier of translation, Halkin settles for the colloquial tartness in English of flogging a dead horse, a considerable improvement over the more anodyne proverb that the Butwins attribute to the Talmud.

One of the boldest moves Halkin makes in rendering Sholem Aleichem's use of Jewish sources is frequently to introduce, as at the end of the passage I have quoted, biblical verses or rabbinic sayings in the Hebrew, without translation, just as they appear in the Yiddish. He prudently provides at the end of the volume a glossary of all such citations, in the order of their appearance, with translations and sources. But the effect of transliterating rather than translating the Hebrew is to reproduce something of the textural richness of the Yiddish, to suggest how the narrator is indulging in learned play with sacred texts that actually would not (as Halkin notes) have been immediately comprehensible to everyone in the Yiddish audience.

Even with regard to citations, however, Halkin does not bind himself to a single strategy. His translation in all respects exhibits the virtues of flexibility, inventiveness, zest, and energy. One feels these qualities on every page, almost in every phrase. Menachem Mendl, Tevye's *luftmensh* cousin, is, in close correspondence to the Yiddish rhythms at this point, "a wheeler, a dealer, a schemer, a dreamer, a bag of hot air; no place on earth is bad enough to deserve him!" Tevye renouncing his dreams of riches sounds like this: "Who needs the rat race, the hullabaloo, the night life, the rubbing elbows with millionaires, the whole *lehoyshivi im nedivim*, when all I want is to enjoy a peaceful old age in which I can study a bit

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of Mishnah now and then and recite a few chapters of Psalms?"

THIS volume, which at last gives us in English a Sholem Aleichem that is fully alive, inaugurates the Library of Yiddish Classics. One can only hope that its editors will find translators capable of following the splendid precedent set by Hillel Halkin.

Waltzing With Molotov

"THEM": STALIN'S POLISH PUPPETS. By TERESA TORANSKA. *Harper & Row. 384 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by ARCH PUDDINGTON

SOME of the fascination exercised by Communism derives from the atmosphere of intense secrecy which has historically enveloped its leading personalities. Men of average ability—albeit of inordinate determination and single-mindedness—have often been able to reach legendary stature because crucial details of their biographies have been obscured or rewritten, and their thoughts concealed within an impenetrable fog of Leninist vocabulary and rhetoric. Even those who have fallen from the party's grace, suffered the anguish of ideological disillusionment, or simply grown too old to fear official reprisal seem bound by a code of silence which prevents their speaking candidly about the historic events they have participated in.

This has been especially true of the generation responsible for the establishment of Communist rule in Eastern Europe. Many of these figures spent their politically formative years in Moscow, where they were carefully schooled in the methods of Stalinism, to return to their native lands after World War II under the triumphant protection of the Red Army. Once in power, they often cultivated a remoteness from the public as pronounced as was the custom of their counterparts in the Soviet Union. In turn, they were despised by the people over whom they held sway, both because of the oppressiveness of the system and because they were themselves widely seen as agents of a foreign power and as men whose principal loyalty was to Stalin.

Nowhere was Communism so disliked, and individual Communists so reviled, as in Poland. The rather odd title Teresa Toranska has given her collection of interviews with leading Communists of the Stalinist era in fact says a great deal about the huge gulf separating Polish society and the small ruling Communist elite. The Communists themselves do not dispute their unpopularity. Jakub Berman, the regime's number-two man in the late 40's and early 50's, leaves unchallenged Miss Toranska's assertion that fully 90 percent would prefer a non-Communist Poland. His defiant response: "As to the fact that we were few, and still are, history teaches us that the minority always rescues the majority."

There is a great deal of talk about history in these interviews: the lessons of history, the sweep of history, history on the march. The reality of Polish Communism having been such an abject failure, its advocates defend their faith with abstractions, or by citing the presumed achievements of the future. Edward Ochab, a leading party official for over twenty years who briefly served as first secretary, can speak with sincere disapproval of Communism's record of repression, deceit, and ugliness (he himself was decent enough to resign his party positions in protest against the anti-Jewish campaign of 1967-68); yet in practically the same breath he rattles on about the early years of Communism as "the foundation of a new era, a people's era, in the march toward a classless society."

Still, try as her subjects may to camouflage matters when touchy issues are raised, it is a tribute to Miss Toranska's tenacity as a questioner that the formulaic language

ARCH PUDDINGTON *works for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in New York. He contributed "Pol Pot in Retrospect" to our April issue.*

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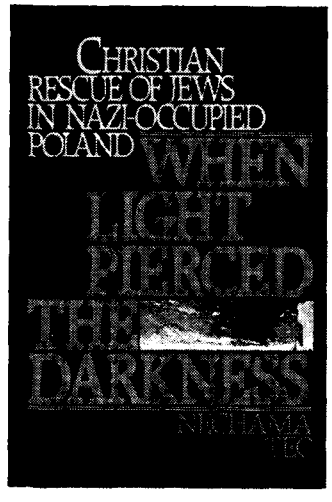

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of Communism is kept to a relative minimum here. A journalist with strong oppositionist sympathies, Miss Toranska was initially commissioned to conduct her interviews with the early leaders of Polish Communism by an official state publishing house. This, however, was during the period when Solidarity enjoyed an aboveground life; after martial law was imposed, the project was dropped. Nevertheless, Miss Toranska pressed ahead; her first group of interviews (there are seven in the Polish version, of which five are included in the American edition) has been widely circulated in *samizdat* inside Poland and has been translated into eleven languages. Another collection of interviews, it is said, is on the way.

WITH one exception, Miss Toranska's subjects remain devoted to the Leninist faith. This in itself is remarkable, since all were variously demoted, purged, humiliated, or turned into nonpersons. Thus, Roman Werfel, who functioned for a time as the leading "party journalist," was expelled from the party in June 1968, presumably a victim of anti-Semitism. Julia Minc, an editor of party journals, was "retired" in 1956 along with her husband, who for a time had controlled all aspects of economic policy. Stefan Staszewski, who held various leadership positions, was stripped of power and later expelled, yet another victim of the anti-Jewish witch hunt. Ochab resigned because of the 1968 events; Berman was expelled in 1957 and retired after working another twelve years as an editor.

Yet of them all, only Staszewski broke with Communism; the others remain convinced that Poland was fortunate to have joined the socialist camp. Although they admit that distortions, errors, and even crimes occurred, they tend to ascribe these deficiencies to events or social trends over which the Polish party had little or no control. The harshness of the Stalinist period is blamed on the United States, for having triggered the cold war. The failure of Edward Gierek's economic strategy is laid to a worldwide economic slump.

Another scapegoat is the Polish people, who stubbornly refuse to accept a Communist destiny. Miss Toranska's subjects betray an antipathy bordering on contempt for the traits generally identified as making up the Polish national character: rebelliousness, a preference for private over collective ownership, patriotism, and, above all, the yearning for national independence. These qualities are dismissed by Roman Werfel as "provincial, parochial, chauvinism." According to Jakub Berman, Poles are "weighed down by complexes" and suffer from "mental backwardness." Again, we are told by Julia Minc that Poland's economic difficulties are due not to any flaws in the system but to "a perfectly visible reluctance to work."

TO WHAT degree were the early Polish Communists the "puppets" of Stalin? The label is perhaps unfortunate. True, proximity to the Soviet Union and the occupying presence of the Soviet armed forces sealed the country's doom after World War II. And clearly, certain policies deemed particularly offensive were dictated from the Kremlin and prosecuted, sometimes reluctantly, by Stalin's Polish subalterns. But at least in its early years, Polish Communism was presided over by men and women who had devoted their entire lives, at no little personal risk, to the effort to bring about a social order roughly resembling Poland in 1953, the year of Stalin's death. Those interviewed by Miss Toranska take advantage of every opportunity to blame the Soviets for their more unpopular initiatives, yet on the fundamental questions—nationalization, collectivization, political pluralism, the autonomy of popular institutions—Polish Communist opinion was in total harmony with orthodox Soviet thinking.

Berman and others do plausibly contend that they resisted Soviet pressure to adopt policies which were likely to produce chaos and bloodshed. Thus, Berman tells us, they understood the folly of massive, overnight collectivization, and even at the height of Stalinist control the Polish leadership proceeded with caution in its dealings with the peasants. Yet at the same time Berman rather derides the peasants for their rejection of collectivization—socialized agriculture, he contends, would put an end to the poverty and self-exploitation which are the dominating characteristics of the peasant's life—and goaded by Miss Toranska he finally admits that political control of the countryside figured prominently in the regime's thinking:

> Let's be honest about this: the peasant can also put a knife to our throats if we don't have any back-up instruments in the countryside. We mustn't be totally dependent on their private farms. . . . Why are they so terribly difficult to deal with? Because we haven't got any more wheat for bread. And the amount of persuading we have to do to get these peasants to give us their wheat!

THE Polish party also attempted to blunt the impact of Soviet-mandated cultural policies, but according to Stefan Staszewski, who was responsible for the introduction of socialist realism throughout Polish artistic life, resistance had to be waged through the most prudent bureaucratic methods. Once Stalin decided that a policy was to be adopted throughout the bloc, overt opposition was futile. Indeed, the cultural climate became so heavily politicized that a decision on whether to publish two short stories actually came before the Politburo, the highest-ranking policy body.

The Soviet grip reached well beyond the cultural realm. The Soviets appointed the judges who heard politically sensitive trials and, of course, exercised considerable authority over the security apparatus. Berman even admits that Polish soccer teams deliberately lost matches to Soviet clubs, a practice which, astonishingly, he endorses on the ground that at these contests Poles frequently gave vent to chauvinistic and anti-Soviet sentiments. He also explains how high Polish party officials arranged their schedules to suit Stalin's peculiar late-night work habits. But the story which perhaps best illuminates the political atmosphere of the period is Berman's grotesque

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account of his dancing with Molotov at one of the ghastly midnight dinners which were Stalin's favorite form of amusement:

Q. Surely you mean with Mrs. Molotov?

A. No, she wasn't there; she was in a labor camp. I danced with Molotov—I think it was a waltz, or at any rate something very simple, because I don't know the faintest thing about dancing, so I just moved my feet in rhythm.

Q. As the woman?

A. Yes, Molotov led; I wouldn't have known how. . . .

Q. What about Stalin—whom did he dance with?

A. Oh, no, Stalin didn't dance. Stalin wound the gramophone, considering it his duty as a citizen. He never left it. He would just put on records and watch.

Q. He watched you?

A. Yes, he watched us dance.

Q. So you enjoyed yourselves.

A. Yes, it was pleasant, but with an inner tension.

Q. You didn't have fun, really?

A. Stalin really had fun. For us these dancing sessions were a good opportunity to whisper to each other things that couldn't be said out loud. That was when Molotov warned me about being infiltrated by various hostile organizations.

Q. Was it a threat?

A. No, it was called a friendly warning. He took advantage of the situation—or perhaps he'd even arranged it himself, since he was the one who asked me to dance—to mention, in passing, a few things which he thought it would be useful for me to know. I took note of them and didn't say anything in response.

FINALLY, there is the issue of official anti-Semitism, which like so much else in the history of Polish Communism has both Polish and Soviet roots. As in many postwar East European countries. Jews were disproportionately represented within the hierarchy of the Polish Communist party. Many Jews held high posts within the security forces, making them particularly vulnerable tagets whenever the party, or the Soviets, needed scapegoats to propitiate a restive populace. One especially insulting method of sending the message that a particular Jewish party member was slated for purge was to have the media publish both his party pseudonym and, in parentheses, his real (i.e., Jewish) name.

During a visit to Poland, Khrushchev pointedly told the leadership that the Soviet Union maintained a *numerus clausus* for Jews: Jews were 2 percent of the population, and made up 2 percent of the ministries. When asked by Staszewski if such a quota might not represent a violation of revolutionary principles, the Soviet leader observed that while he was not personally an anti-Semite, "you have to know the limits." Subsequently, Jews holding influential positions in the Polish party were shifted

SURVEY

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The first of four special issues

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HAS THE SYSTEM SATISFIED THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE?

Guest Editor of the issue: G. R. Urban

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into less prestigious jobs, often in publishing houses. Even after this humiliation, the Jews could not escape the stigma of their birth. Staszewski relates the disgraceful story of how, in the late 60's, editors of the Polish *General Encyclopedia* were persecuted by ultranationalist party elements, the putative grounds being that they had had the temerity to publish in the *Encyclopedia* the number of Polish Jews who had died in the Holocaust.

Staszewski observes that "the party always has to have an enemy in order to consolidate its ranks." This is because Communism's premise of material abundance and equality is so obviously false. Indeed, those interviewed by Miss Toranska are at their best when speaking of the scheming and duplicity that were normal features of party life; they are at their weakest concerning policy matters, or in addressing questions about the supposed achievements of Communism. In a sense, therefore, the revelations in *"Them"* simply ratify what is generally known about Communism's record of failure. But the wealth of details and anecdotes, coming from the mouths of those who helped shape that tawdry history, make this book an indispensable source in the literature of the Communist experience.

Escape from Prison?

PUNISHMENT WITHOUT WALLS. By DOUGLAS CORRY MCDONALD. *Rutgers University Press. 278 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by JOHN J. DIIULIO, JR.

OVER the last two decades, criminal-justice scholars, policymakers, and activists have been tripping over one another in a rush to find meaningful alternatives to incarceration. In the 1960's and for much of the 1970's, the search was spearheaded by radical reformers who viewed prisons and jails as the "social control" instruments of last resort for America's racist, bourgeois polity. Liberals, for their part, spoke little about costs and much about "rehabilitation," and hardly a word about the government's duty to punish criminals.

Almost single-handedly, the first edition of James Q. Wilson's *Thinking About Crime* (1975) changed all that. Wilson took the more thoughtful alternative-seekers on a rendezvous with the fact that prisons and jails are necessary to protect society against violent and chronic offenders. It is a measure of Wilson's influence that Douglas Corry McDonald's excellent book, although devoted to precisely one such alternative program, contains none of the cant that punctuated most earlier calls for alternatives to incarceration.

IN 1978 the Vera Institute of Justice in New York City began a Community Service Sentencing Project in the Bronx County Criminal Court. Within three years, similar projects were under way in the lower courts of Brooklyn and Manhattan. Rather than being sent to jail or simply let go, some 2,400 small-time but chronic property offenders were each required to perform seventy hours of community service. Under strict supervision, the unpaid offenders painted nursing homes, fixed park benches, renovated ghetto houses, and performed other such chores.

Using fairly sophisticated statistical techniques as well as rich interview data, McDonald, a senior research associate at Vera, gives a detailed, honest insider's account of how the program was established and what it accomplished. According to McDonald, the program succeeded in reducing the demand for jail cells and in providing the courts "with greater flexibility in scaling penal sanctions to different types of crimes and criminals." On the debit side, however, the direct dollar costs of operating the program were substantial, while a few hundred crimes, most of them nonviolent (shoplifting, drug sales, prostitution, gambling), were committed that would have been prevented had the offenders been sent to Rikers Island.

McDonald, who has written extensively on the difficult problem of estimating correctional costs, is a scrupulous scholar. In *Punishment Without Walls*, he displays a refreshing sensitivity to both the technical and the moral complexities involved in evaluating alternatives to incarceration. A Benthamite carrying a Kantian torch, he argues that in searching for ways to punish offenders, "utilitarian goals" (deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation) are important but should take a back seat to "commensurate deserts." He attempts to show that well-designed, well-run alternatives to incarceration such as the one he studied should satisfy us on both practical and moral grounds.

SHOULD we be satisfied? Since the Vera project, several good alternative programs have come on the horizon (e.g., New Jersey's Intensive Supervision Program for burglars, small-time drug traffickers, and other "minor" offenders). Already, however, about three-quarters of the roughly three million citizens under some form of correctional supervision in this country are not incarcerated, and caseloads for the nation's probation and parole officers have doubled or tripled in recent years. Meanwhile, we have over 540,000 persons in prison, and virtually all of them are locked up because they pose a real threat to society; they are violent offenders, repeat offenders, or violent repeat offenders. Demographic trends plus recent changes in sentencing practices at the state and federal levels mean that, by the year 2000, California and the Federal Bureau of Prisons alone will house some 200,000 prisoners.

Thus, even if the use of alternatives to incarceration were to progress rapidly, the nation's jails still would be admitting or releasing some 16 million people each year. Between 1978 and 1983, the country's jail population increased by over 40 percent; New York City's inmate total has doubled since 1980 and will near 20,000 before the decade is out. Nationally, approximately half of those in jail are serv-

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JOHN J. DIIULIO, JR., *a new contributor, is assistant professor of politics and public affairs at Princeton. His book,* Governing Prisons: A Comparative Study of Correctional Management, *has recently been published by the Free Press.*

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ing a sentence or are behind bars for violating probation or parole.

While demonstrating that he is cognizant of such facts, and while remaining sober about the promise of alternatives to incarceration, McDonald does not stress adequately that "punishment without walls" neither is nor can become any sort of broad-scale substitute for prisons and jails. Nor does he give sufficient acknowledgment to recent studies showing that, through more disciplined and security-conscious management, prisons and jails can themselves be made more safe, clean, and cost-effective—schools of citizenship rather than schools of crime. Moreover, he is much too quick to sweep aside his own finding that a majority of offenders sent to do community service "declined to describe it as a punishment when asked"; quite correctly, the street hoodlums defined the sentence as a "lucky break." That even effective alternative programs may be too lenient is a moral possibility that McDonald raises but does not take seriously enough. Nor, finally, does he say anything about conservative proposals such as corporal punishment and a more extensive use of the death penalty.

Punishment Without Walls is an important contribution to the burgeoning literature on how to handle convicted criminals, but the escape from prison may be both less feasible and less desirable than the author would wish us to conclude.

Liberalism Lite

CURSE OF THE GIANT MUFFINS AND OTHER WASHINGTON MALADIES. By MICHAEL KINSLEY. *Summit. 286 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by TERRY TEACHOUT

THE dust jacket of *Curse of the Giant Muffins and Other Washington Maladies* describes Michael Kinsley as "the hottest young columnist in Washington." *Vanity Fair* recently published a vulgar puff piece by Christopher Hitchens explaining why Kinsley is the greatest thing since Walter Lippmann. *New York* calls him "perhaps the best current practitioner of Washington political writing as hip essay." (High praise, that.) Not only does his syndicated column seem to be the apple of every eye, but producers of such televised gabfests as *Crossfire* and *The McLaughlin Group* are finding him harder and harder to do without.

All of this gilt-edged attention has now parlayed itself into *Curse of the Giant Muffins*, a collection of columns from the *New Republic* and elsewhere which is Michael Kinsley's first book. Not that Kinsley would have anyone inflate the significance of this gesture to posterity. "First of all," he writes, "I don't want any grief about throwing together a bunch of old articles and calling it a book. If you think that's cheating, don't buy it." This, however, is merely one of the author's standard bits of ironic camouflage, his equivalent of the standup comedian's "But seriously, folks." Columnists may appear on television for fun and profit, but they publish books in order to look thoughtful.

So let us take Michael Kinsley, ingenuous protests notwithstanding, as seriously as the occasion merits. To begin with, what does he believe in? Of the 63 columns collected in *Curse of the Giant Muffins*, exactly one was written in praise of something or somebody. The party in question, as it happens, is Ralph Nader, although if Kinsley had not thoughtfully tacked on a notice explaining his purpose in "Saint Ralph," many readers might well have understood it as just another savaging.

The rest of the book is devoted to the skewering of an unbroken succession of ludicrous, gibbering hypocrites, not one of whom, with the possible exception of Mario Cuomo, deserves in Kinsley's view to be taken with less than a stalactite of salt.

Kinsley eventually gets around to showing his colors, but in the most tepid way imaginable. "I like to think of myself as a liberal," he writes, "although I don't like it enough to waste time in tedious

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TERRY TEACHOUT *is a member of the editorial board of the New York* Daily News.

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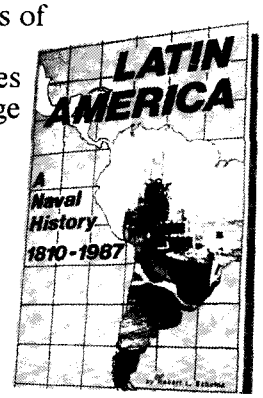

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arguments with people who think I don't deserve the label." Note the characteristic sleight of hand in the second half of the sentence. Whatever else Kinsley means by it, he does not mean to suggest that he is a conservative. ("I don't know *anyone* who believes that the United States and the Soviet Union are 'morally equivalent.'") But *Curse of the Giant Muffins* is altogether lacking in anything remotely like a clear-cut affirmation of liberalism. Too smart by half to swallow Jesse Jackson or International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Kinsley nevertheless oozes pap on the rare occasions when he is forced to put forth a credo of his own:

> But politics is about ideology, and the Democratic party might as well fold up and go away unless it has the courage to present itself as forthrightly to the left of the Republicans. "To the left" needn't mean a rejection of growth and strength. But it must mean a demonstrated greater concern for the have-nots of our society and a greater skepticism about military adventure.

Curse of the Giant Muffins, then, espouses what might be called Liberalism Lite, a campy pseudo-ideology which consists chiefly of making fun of conservatives. "A good test of political seriousness," Kinsley writes, "is whether anyone opposes what you have to say." A better test of political seriousness is whether what you have to say suggests that you know what you are talking about. These sprightly, shallow columns suggest nothing of the kind. However uncomfortable he may be with the egalitarian follies of late liberalism, Michael Kinsley is incapable of criticizing the underlying assumptions of conservatism on any level deeper than that of a witty trashing: "In its purest intellectual form, meritocracy consists of the belief—generally advanced by people who were born smart but not rich—that all the natural advantages of being born rich should be eliminated, while all the natural advantages of being born smart should be preserved."

Since everything is a joke to Michael Kinsley, it is not quite right to call him a satirist. His work substitutes preppy nastiness for the lacerating indignation of, say, a Malcolm Muggeridge. And herein may lie the reason for his growing popularity. A post-modern pundit, Kinsley suits the present-day *Zeitgeist* of flippancy right down to the ground. "We do not nowadays refute our predecessors," George Santayana said, "we pleasantly bid them goodbye." Minus the pleasantness, that is Kinsley's *modus operandi* in a nutshell. In the end, his is a purely frivolous vision of politics, one in which the now-*déclassé* qualities of seriousness and commitment, whether liberal or conservative, are blithely dismissed with a sneer and a languid wave of the hand.

The work of columnists like Michael Kinsley used to run next to Art Buchwald. Now they appear in person on *Nightline*. The length of that journey is a pretty good measure of the intellectual depths to which liberalism has sunk.

Korean Democrat

PRISON WRITINGS. By KIM DAE-JUNG. *University of California Press. 333 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM MCGURN

ON A dull Monday morning in June of this year, the presidential choice of South Korea's ruling Democratic Justice party (DJP), Roh Tae-Woo, stunned the world with his announcement that he would urge President Chun Doo Huan to accept every major reform demanded by the opposition, especially direct presidential elections. Two days later President Chun made it official, and overnight the most violent demonstrations his regime had ever faced ceased, except for outbursts from the more radical students. Next to direct elections, the most significant concession was the restoration of full political and civil rights for Korea's best-known dissident, Kim Dae-Jung.

The ironies are legion. For one thing, it was the DJP's nomination of Roh—hand-picked by his old army buddy, Chun himself—that had caused Korea's hitherto quiet (and burgeoning) middle class to take to the streets in protest. For another, although the reforms restored Kim's rights they did so at the expense of the aura of martyrdom he had exploited to great effect, particularly with a foreign press corps impressed with his command of English (he studied at Harvard) and his frequent appeals to American democratic principles. That this man once convicted of treason may well become South Korea's president one day at the very least qualifies any comparison of him with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, such as is drawn on the cover of his new book, *Prison Writings*, only now available in English.

Written during his last incarceration (1980-82), *Prison Writings* is a hodgepodge of freelance theology, paternal admonishment, schoolmasterish sermons on history, often dubious policy assessments, and equally frequent flashes of insight. No stranger to jail cells, Kim wrote the first part of these letters while under sentence of death for what the Chun government claimed was his role in the Kwangju rebellion; after five months his death sentence was lifted, but he was kept in prison for over a year more.

WHAT kind of man emerges from the letters? A democrat, an anti-Communist, and a man possessed of a courage that is in no small measure related to his faith in God. Kim has faced death squarely several times—including once when, kidnapped by Korean intelligence from a Japanese hotel, he would have been thrown into the sea to drown were it not for U.S. intelligence officials monitoring events overhead. He possesses, on this account, a certain undeniable moral credibility—which is not, however, the same thing as having the proper qualifications to run a nation.

Kim's credibility rests in part

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on what he is not: namely, a woolly-headed, American-style liberal. Indeed, there are few Koreans of this stripe altogether; if they are not tough-minded opposition liberals or supporters of the government, they are out-and-out Communists. Kim himself invokes the strengths of democracy in facing the Communist threat. "It is an undeniable fact," he writes, "that the workers and the general populace in countries where it is possible to enjoy both freedom and sufficient bread reject Communism fundamentally."

This is a powerful argument, one Kim frequently invokes against those who have maintained that South Korea cannot "afford" democracy because it would make the country too unstable to deal with the fanatical regime in the North. Not that Kim, who was imprisoned by the Communists during the Korean war, takes the 38th parallel lightly. "In view of their experience with Hitler," he writes, the Western powers "should remember how dangerous it is to adopt a conciliatory or submissive position when dealing with the threats of dictators." On much the same grounds Kim has never demanded a U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea. These eminently sensible positions, one imagines, would ironically place Kim at odds with many of the circles in the West championing his cause.

Throughout his letters Kim also emerges as an equally strong defender of the theory of a free market, and in its name he inveighs against the export-obsessed state capitalism now practiced in Korea. "The most important rule in formulating new economic policy is to adhere to the basic principles of a free economy," he writes. "Unique situations in countries may produce great differences in the means, but the principle cannot be undermined."

A startling aspect of Kim's letters to his family is how little space he devotes to anything but politics, history, and religion. True, he does respond to specific points obviously raised by his wife and children in their letters to him, here warning one son to be careful driving, there discussing another's studies. (Perhaps the most human moment occurs when he returns a blanket his family has sent him because he dislikes the color.) But such notes seem almost perfunctory, and Kim is quick to jump into higher matters. These —from Korean history to international relations—are dealt with in a hectoring drone no doubt born of loneliness, as if the writer were intent on summing up all he has ever learned in a few lines.

When he is not discussing politics, Kim deals with religion. It is no coincidence that both he and his fellow opposition leader, Kim Young-Sam, are both Christians (Kim Dae-Jung is a Roman Catholic), for the social implications of Christianity are less accommodating to traditional Asian authoritarianism than are those of either Confucianism or Buddhism. And though it is a cliché to say so, Kim's strong faith is clearly what has helped sustain him during his many adversities. His flights into the religious ether at times make for rough going, but they never degenerate into Carteresque gooiness. Kim is well aware of the hard choices his ideals pose, and has showed himself willing to pay the price.

THE religious motif, which dominates the first third of the letters, especially while Kim believes he will be executed, is never far from the other parts. At no time does Kim urge retribution against Chun and the government that put him in jail; "the happiness we derive from becoming Christian consists of loving, not hating, our enemies." Although this is no more than what might be expected of a prisoner who had to submit all his letters to the censor, Kim has not changed his tune outside the prison gates.

What is the effect of this personal faith on the vision of the man who would be—and very well might be—president? For one thing, Kim's transnational Christian faith, with its roots in the West, does free him from Eastern chauvinism. Deeply attached as he is to Korean cultural traditions and the strong sense of the family in Asian societies, he can also see

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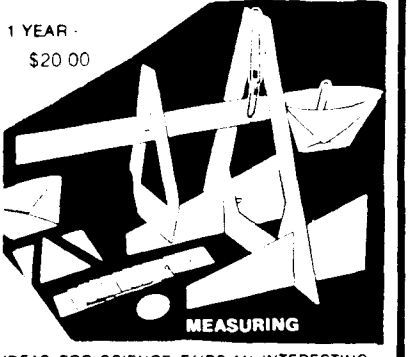

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its faults. "We are so concerned with formal appearances that we quite disregard practical benefits," he writes, "while our excessive sensitivity to the issue of losing face often leads us to pretensions we cannot sustain and ultimately to waste."

On the other hand, Kim has escaped the pitfall of Asian chauvinism only to succumb, at times, to the more sophisticated Christian brand. Not that he ever endorses anything like liberation theology, but he does share its essential approach. Thus Kim notes that Jesus "was executed as a political prisoner by the Jewish ruling class and the Roman empire for standing up for the rights of the oppressed and the poor." Elsewhere, too, he shares in the hubris of those modern-day Christians who fancy they are the first to own a conscience: "[O]nly since we entered the 20th century has the church begun to uphold the will of the Lord Jesus and the example of the original church."

ALTHOUGH a jumble of disconnected letters such as *Prison Writings* can by no means be taken as a crafted political manifesto, it does provide clues to the author's general orientation and suggest how he would react to specific issues. And here it must be said that Kim's generally sound principles become singularly uninspiring whenever he proposes to adapt them to a particular situation. Perhaps this is no more than is to be expected, since the books he is forever requesting at the end of his letters are almost entirely drawn from the conventional left-wing establishment: from John Kenneth Galbraith and Gunnar Myrdal to Alvin Toffler and Hans Küng.

Thus, for all his words about the reality of Soviet and Communist power, Kim's prescription for dealing with it sounds like nothing so much as détente, if of the so-called hard-headed, or Nixonian, variety. Similarly, Kim appears to believe that the "problem" of Third World poverty is that the West is not providing enough aid —a thesis all the more remarkable in light of South Korea's shining disproof of it.

As for the Middle East, Kim writes that the "Israeli problem," as he terms it, is the cause of the Arab world's larger hostility toward the West:

> Once this problem [of Palestine] is resolved . . . the Western nations will be able to form harmonious relationships with the Islamic nations, as countries which share monotheistic beliefs. Practical and economic dependence will further facilitate this.

One does not need the extreme example of Iran to appreciate that Islam, anti-Communist though it is, by and large holds Western liberal democracy to be as vile as Communism.

FINALLY, it should be noted that the author of *Prison Writings* has been intellectually manhandled by his publishers. The book is badly presented; there is but the barest of introductions to Kim himself, and the reader will not even discover how old he is. The letters themselves are not put into any context; here and there a date is wrong; and the book does not include, or at least does not label, the letters from his wife and the speech he delivered after his release that are promised on the dust-jacket.

Still, these letters do give a good indication of where South Korea would be headed were Kim to lead it: by and large, in a direction not very different from its present one. Those who have met recently with both opposition and government officials have the impression that there is little dividing the two on matters of social and economic policy. What seems to matter is who is in office. Kim himself has done little to dispel this impression in the wake of Korea's reform, displaying a lust for power equal to that of any five-star Korean general. Certainly this fact has not escaped the notice of the South Korean electorate.

Ironically, freedom itself might yet prove the greatest challenge to a man accustomed to a lifetime of dissent. No longer will Koreans be content with Kim's incessant demands for "change": they will want to know exactly what he intends to do and how he proposes to do it. It is quite possible to admire the virtues that make Kim a near-saint while questioning whether they make him fit for the presidency. If the mundane political difficulties in which Kim has found himself since June are any clue, this kind of questioning is exactly what the Korean public seems to have done.

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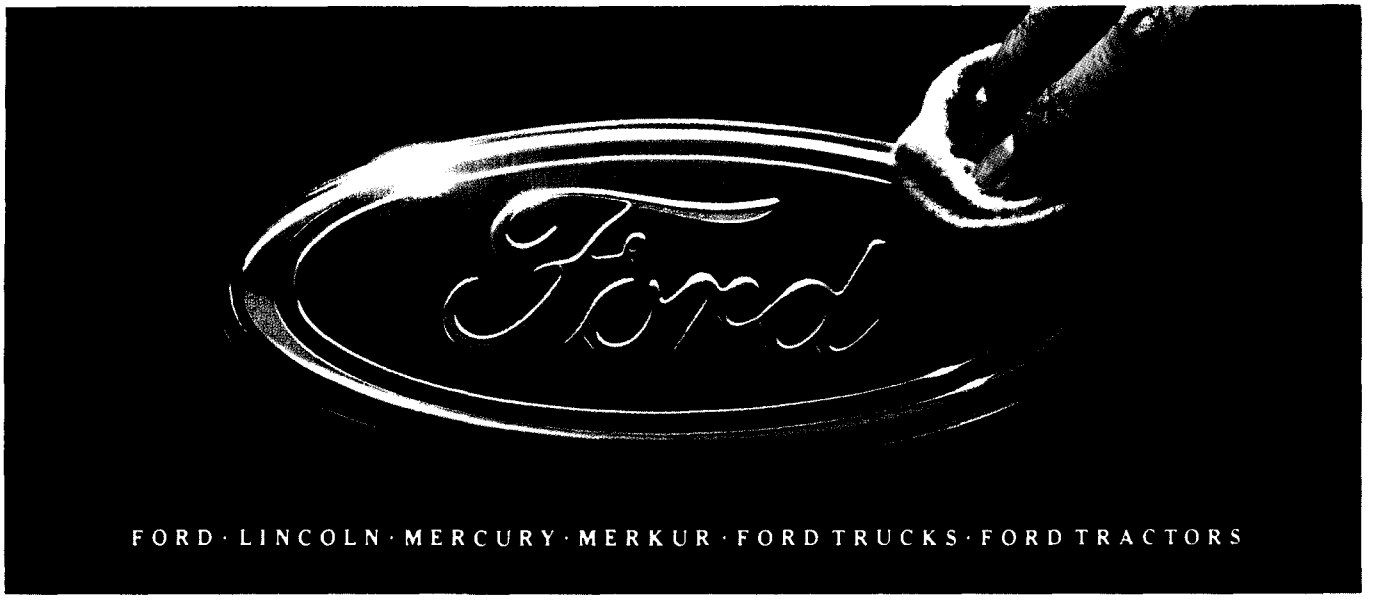

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